

The London School of Economics and Political  
Science

***Risk, Resilience and Responsibilisation***  
***Gendered Participation and Empowerment in Informal***  
***Settlements of Metro Cebu, the Philippines***

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## Abstract

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-affected countries in the world and considered especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. As the economic, social and environmental consequences of these phenomena become more pronounced across the archipelago, disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation have unsurprisingly gained more attention in national and local policies and development agendas. Within this terrain, community-based DRRM (CBDRRM) has emerged as a core orthodoxy informing intervention, particularly in the context of low-income informal settlements which are among the most exposed and least able to protect themselves and recover from such events. In Metro Cebu, calls for creating a more 'sustainable' and 'resilient' city are also placing urban poor communities in an increasingly precarious position, with those living in areas classed as 'danger zones' simultaneously facing intensified pressures of displacement in the name of risk management. Amidst this context of multiple and overlapping forms of risk and insecurity, community organising among informal settlers has become a critical mechanism for building local capacities and resisting different socio-political and environmental threats. Largely mobilised and driven by women, these grassroots entities, often in the shape of homeowner associations, are fundamental to collective contestations of policies and practices that adversely or unfairly affect the urban poor of Cebu, while also serving as strategic sites for advancing claims on public resources and local risk management activities.

This thesis interrogates the gendered politics of risk and community organising among informal settlers in Metro Cebu. Drawing on the perspectives and experiences of women and men living in areas classed as danger zones, I argue that encounters with risk (and disaster) constitute an 'everyday' rather than 'exceptional' reality for informal settlers, and that the siloed focus on large-scale catastrophic events obscures these gendered realities and therein limits the efficacy of CBDRRM initiatives. Relatedly, I contend that the language of 'disasters' and 'climate change' being endorsed and propagated by the Philippine state depoliticises discussions of risk by concealing the socio-political and structural drivers of vulnerability and deflecting attention away from the power configurations and actors complicit in the production of risk. In fact, my analysis of how DRRM features within broader urban development processes in the metropole showcases how 'disaster resilience' and 'pro-poor development' are being mobilised to serve elite commercial interests and legitimise the removal of slums.

Lastly, I consider the political engagement of informal settlers within this landscape through a focus on homeowner associations which I identify as critical to risk management in urban poor communities. I argue that grassroots 'resilience-building' and CBDRRM are decidedly gendered in practice, and reveal complex dynamics whereby participation in these activities is reinforcing gendered inequalities and power differentials while simultaneously facilitating positive personal transformations among female members in particular. The findings of this study reinforce the importance of understanding the socio-spatial manifestations of gender roles, power and agency within DRRM, 'resilience-building' and broader urban development processes. They also contribute to advancing broader urban geography and political ecology considerations of how gender and (disaster) risk are implicated in urban governance and city-making processes.

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## List of Acronyms

ALERT	Alaska Emergency Response Team
All POWER	The Alliance of People's Organisations Working for Empowerment and Resettlement
BOPK	Tomas Osmeña's political party
CBDRRM	Community-based disaster risk reduction and management
CCA	Climate change adaptation
CCT	Conditional cash transfer
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
CICC	Cebu International Convention Centre
CMP	Community Mortgage Programme
COD	Community Organising Division (within FORGE)
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
DRRM	Disaster risk reduction and management
DWUP	Department for the Welfare of the Urban Poor
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
FORGE	Fellowship for Organising Endeavours (NGO)
GAD	Gender and development
GDI	Gender and Development Index
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GNI	Gross national income
HLURB	Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board
HUDO	Housing and Urban Development Office

INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ISFs	Informal Settler Families
KADAMAY	<i>Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap</i> (Federation of Mutual Aid for the Poor)
LGU	Local government unit
LMISKP	Lower Mahiga <i>Inahan sa Kanunayng Panabang</i> (mother of continuous help) Homeowners Association
MCDCB	Metro Cebu Development and Coordinating Board
MOA	Memorandum of agreement (
MUPHAI	Mantuyong Urban Poor Homeowners Association
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OFWs	Overseas foreign workers
4Ps	<i>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme</i> (a national conditional cash transfer programme)
PCUP	Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RA	Republic Act
RAFI	Ramon Aboitiz Foundation
SAHA	Sitio Aroma Homeowners Association
SIR	Slum Improvement and Resettlement
SITAPRA	Sitio Tanke Residents Association
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOD	Social Outreach Division within the NGO FORGE
SRP	South Reclamation Project/South Road Properties
TULHOA	Tarcom Upper Laguerta Homeowners Association
TAHAS	Tabarno Homeowners Association

UDHA	Urban Development and Housing Act (RA 7279)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
VAWC	Violence against women and children
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure
WCC	Women and Children's Committee, later renamed Family Development Committees
WED	Women environment and development
WID	Women in development

## Glossary of Vernacular Terms

<i>Barangay</i>	The Filipino term for village, district or ward, barangays are the smallest formal administrative division in local government
<i>Barong barong</i>	Makeshift houses
<i>Bayanihan</i>	The Philippine tradition of mutual assistance and collective action
<i>Bugoy</i>	Truant, happy-go-lucky
<i>The Capitol</i>	The Cebu Provincial Government
<i>Carinderia</i>	Occasional home-based eatery
<i>Endo</i>	Colloquial shorthand term for 'end of contract' referring to the widespread practice of companies employing workers on temporary contracts
<i>Habal-habal</i>	Motorcycle taxi
<i>Maldita</i>	A term denoting negative qualities in a person, which include being mischievous, lacking discipline and/or having malicious intentions
<i>Flying saucer</i>	A colloquial term that describes a method of disposing of human waste employed by some who lack access to toilet facilities, which involves plastic bags of faeces being flung indiscriminately into the air
<i>Kangkong</i>	Water spinach
<i>Lugaw tsampurado</i>	Chocolate porridge
<i>Puso</i>	Hanging rice wrapped in palm leaves
<i>Sari-sari</i>	A small and typically home-operated grocery outlet
<i>Sidelines</i>	Informal sector work, taken on alongside other income generating activities
<i>Sitio</i>	A sub-barangay political (and territorial) classification typically demarcating a group of households living in a particular area (similar to zones)
<i>Shabu</i>	A colloquial term for methamphetamine.
<i>Sore eyes</i>	An eyesore
<i>Tinabangay</i>	The Cebuano term for <i>bayanihan</i> (see above)

<i>Tokhang</i>	House to house visitations by police to persuade suspected drug users and/or dealers to stop their activities and surrender
<i>Tongits</i>	A local card game
<i>Trisikad</i>	Pedicab

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# 1 Introduction: risk, gender and resilience

It is Friday 5 December, 2014, my first day in the Philippines. After an arduous 23 hour flight from London to Manila, I wake up in my hotel room in Quezon City to the news that Typhoon Hagupit, known locally as Ruby, is scheduled to hit the eastern part of the archipelago later that day. Having chosen to focus my research in the Philippines precisely because of its reputation as one of the most disaster-affected countries in the world, I can't believe my carelessness in not checking the weather before leaving; especially as just over a year ago, on 7 November, 2013, the country was ravaged by Super Typhoon Yolanda, the strongest storm ever recorded (at the time) to make landfall, sustaining winds speeds of over 200 km per hour, and leaving more than 6000 people dead and five million homeless. Needless to say, the country is now on high alert, and in anticipation of what might be approaching, thousands have been evacuated to emergency shelters. Looking out at the heavy rain from the window of my second floor hotel room, I find myself thinking about the millions of informal settlers bracing themselves for the storm.

The thought stays with me as I venture to a nearby coffee shop, battling through the pellet like rain that attacks me from all directions, and occasional gusts of wind, strong enough to stop me in my tracks. To my surprise, the streets, though perhaps quieter than usual, are buzzing with packed jeepneys emitting thick grey exhaust plumes, and pedestrians of all ages hurriedly making their way to their intended destinations. Business as usual, I think to myself, though I later learn that schools, universities and some of the larger employers have closed for the day as a precautionary measure. Three days and two broken umbrellas later, the worst of the storm has passed through without causing much visible disruption, bar a few reports of localised flooding and electrical outages. Sadly, in the Visayan regions which bore the brunt of Ruby's force, despite the concerted efforts of local and national disaster risk reduction and emergency response teams, 22 people have been reported dead and another hundred injured, with total damage to agriculture and infrastructure estimated at over 5 billion pesos (equivalent to USD 100 million). Notwithstanding the scale of the catastrophe that has afflicted the same regions that are still rebuilding following last year's super typhoon, there is a ubiquitous sense of relief that a 'more major disaster' has been averted.

A few days later, I meet with staff from the Centre for Disaster Preparedness, one of the leading organisations working nationally in capacity building, research and advocacy relating to disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM). Over the course of our two-hour-long discussion, they describe ongoing community organising and gender

mainstreaming efforts in different regions, explaining the role of local and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in DRRM, and the gender dynamics they have observed in the various communities with whom they work. They collectively share that in their experience, women tend to be the main attendees and active participants in local DRRM activities, a reality they attribute to the fact that ‘the men are usually at work’. In the context of preparedness and post-disaster recovery, women are again highlighted as critical actors, as are community organisations, namely homeowner associations and women’s groups. As we near the end of our conversation, we are joined by a woman from DAMPA, a network of 200-plus community-based, (and predominantly women-led) organisations, working on DRRM across the Philippines. After a brief discussion about my research interests and the broader purpose of my visit, she invites me to attend DAMPA’s upcoming general assembly which is being held in Manila. Delighted by the offer, I eagerly accept the invitation, and two days later, find myself in a room with more than 30 grassroots female leaders from across the country.

Over a lunch of fried chicken and rice, those nearest me tell me about their homes and communities. All of them reside in informal settlements, the majority in coastal areas, including the famous Tondo slum of Metro Manila, as well as rural provincial townships in eastern Mindanao and Leyte routinely battered by storms coming in from the Pacific. When I ask them how they managed during Typhoon Ruby, the three women from Manila describe the difficulties they faced in keeping their children safe and belongings dry throughout the storm, and proceed to tell me that only yesterday, a fire broke out in their area, destroying their homes and possessions. Thankfully no one died. Despite the immediacy of this personal catastrophe, they say they chose to come to the meeting today, since, in their words, staying in the community won’t bring these things back, so they just need to carry on and move forward. The determination and resolve exemplified by these women who had just lost their homes, and their commitment to participate in this meeting, strikes me, yet, watching the women share hugs, laughter and support throughout the day, I can understand their decision. Though not in an area identified at the time as ‘disaster-affected’, Tondo residents and other informal settlers like them, had their homes and belongings damaged by the rains, storm surge and floodwaters that accompanied Typhoon Ruby. Many likely contracted illnesses from the wet conditions, and lost incomes trying to protect their homes instead of working, or simply because the weather conditions made their livelihood activities impossible. That in the brief period of respite that followed Ruby, over one hundred people in Tondo saw their homes destroyed in a fire that received little if any media attention, the subjective meaning of ‘disaster’ remains at the forefront of my mind.

## ***1.1 Risk, gender and resilience in urban informal settlements***

### ***1.1.1 My path preceding the PhD***

Reflecting back on where my PhD journey began and where I have ended up, I can't help but smile at the synchronicity of events that led me to researching gender and disaster resilience in the Philippines. In many ways, this topic and the feminist lens and methodological principles I have adopted, reflect a coming together of my academic and professional life, both of which have revolved around my interest in environmental change and social justice. My undergraduate degree was in environmental science after which I spent nearly ten years working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Canada, Panama, East Africa, and the United Kingdom on projects relating respectively to food security, HIV/AIDS and gender mainstreaming, and homelessness. After a few years in the homelessness sector, I found myself missing the international and environmental focus of my previous work, so decided to do a masters in urbanisation and development, and then went on to start my PhD.

Since my undergrad, I have been interested in (and critical of) the packaging of sustainable development initiatives, particularly in terms of who and what gets left out of the discussion. With the increasing focus on climate change and natural disasters within these conversations, during my masters, I also found myself thinking about how the term resilience is being mobilised, and the bodies and communities that bear the costs of being resilient. In addition to being able to conduct in-depth research on a topic of personal interest, I also saw the PhD as an opportunity for me to learn about a part of the world that I had little exposure to. The Philippines, a lower middle-income country that is considered one of the most gender equitable countries in the world, and whose vulnerability to climate change had recently (at the time) come to attract significant international attention following the super typhoon, seemed like an interesting place for exploring the nexus between gender, class and resilience to environmental change. In short, it was the culmination of my interests and professional background in gender mainstreaming and participatory development, housing justice and environment change that inspired this study and informed the feminist political ecology framework and participatory methods adopted (see Chapters 2 and 3).

### ***1.1.2 Poverty, gender and climate change***

As the above vignette illustrates, navigating risk is an inherent part of urban life, especially for the poor, who by definition, have more limited economic assets and political power to protect themselves from social, political and environmental insecurities. In countries such

as the Philippines, where the consequences of global warming present a very real set of current and future challenges, the precarious conditions facing low-income urban communities are further exacerbated. Perhaps a reflection of growing international awareness and concern for these issues, the 2030 Development Agenda marks the first time that climate change has featured explicitly in a global framework, with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 calling on countries to ‘take urgent action to control climate change and its impacts’ (United Nations, 2018: 10). Notwithstanding, in the Philippines, which according to the comprehensive records of the International Disaster Database has experienced more natural hazards than any other country in the world (Bankoff, 1999: 387, 2003), climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) have long been prominent in urban and social development agendas, although notably more so since Typhoon Yolanda.

Situated along two major tectonic fault lines in an area known as ‘the Pacific Rim of Fire’, the combined geophysical and meteorological characteristics of the Philippines contribute to its exceptional propensity to a range of natural hazards (Bankoff, 2003: 47). The archipelago is home to more than 220 volcanos of which twenty are considered active (Bankoff, 1999: 386). It also experiences an average of five earthquakes daily, and though most of these are not strong enough to be noticed, Filipinos are no strangers to the destructive effects of seismic activity. Furthermore, its unshielded geographic location leaves it especially exposed to high intensity tropical storms coming in from the Pacific Ocean that in turn result in flooding, soil degradation and saltwater intrusion carrying significant socio-economic impacts (Bankoff, 2003: 31; Climate Change Commission, 2011; World Bank, 2013). Philippine cities are some of the most vulnerable in the East Asian and Pacific region to storm surge (Dasgupta et al., 2009: 33). Between 1985 and 2011, 157.94 million Filipinos were reportedly affected by natural hazards with an additional 57,227 associated deaths recorded (HDN, 2013: 16). Tropical storms numbering between 20 and 30 per year, around ten of which are classified as typhoons, are responsible for more economic damage and loss of life than any other hazard in the archipelago (Climate Change Commission, 2011). In 2009 alone, typhoons affected 10 million people, destroying 154,000 houses and causing damage to a further 78,000 (Collin et al., 2011: 10).

It is estimated that almost 40 percent of urban dwellers in the archipelago are living in overcrowded slum settlements (UNSD, 2015),<sup>1</sup> many of which are in low-lying flood-prone areas or on steep slopes vulnerable to landslides, with limited access to basic infrastructure including water and sanitation. Despite their location on sites that might appear ‘undesirable’ to those with alternatives, rapid urbanisation in a context of severe land shortages and an increasingly competitive landscape of commercial and property development have made security of shelter and land tenure one of the most pressing concerns facing informal settlers in urban agglomerations such as Metro Manila in Luzon and Metro Cebu in the Central Visayas, both of which continue to attract a high number of migrants from smaller cities and rural townships in search of work. Within this context of multiple and overlapping forms of risk and insecurity, community organising among urban informal settlers has become a critical mechanism for building local capacities and resisting various socio-political and environmental threats. Largely mobilised and driven by women, these grassroots organisations, often in the shape of homeowner associations, are fundamental to collective contestations of policies and practices that adversely or unfairly affect the urban poor, and are also a necessary precursor to any dialogue or negotiations with the state, including making claims on public resources. While not necessarily a new feature of the urban political landscape, as my thesis reveals, these organisations are proving pivotal to risk management activities in informal settlements.

With narratives of ‘resilience-building’ simultaneously emerging as the new mantra of CCA and sustainable urban development in the Philippines, homeowner associations are also being harnessed by governments and NGOs alike, especially in the realm of DRRM where community-based approaches have become the new orthodoxy. However the extent to which this ‘bottom-up’ form of governance has actually enhanced the engagement and accountability of the state in meeting the needs of informal settlers within the archipelago has yet to be critically appraised. This, I argue, is an important point of inquiry to ensure that these communities are not simply left to shoulder the bulk of the burdens for ‘building back better’, shrouded in a language of participation, empowerment and resilience. Another

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘slum’ can be applied to residential settlements lacking one or more of the following: access to a safe, accessible and affordable water supply; adequate sanitation including access to private or public toilets facilities, shared with a reasonable number of people; durable housing offering protection against extreme climatic conditions and which is located in non-hazardous environments; sufficient living space with not more than three people sharing one room; and security of tenure for protection against forced evictions (UN-Habitat, 2008, 2014). Throughout this thesis I refer to ‘informal settlements’ in place of slums, owing to the pejorative meaning that has come to be associated with the latter.

point that remains obscure is why these community-based mobilisations are largely dominated by women, in numbers if not always in authority, and how (if at all) these feminised spaces of collective action are reshaping gender and class relations at the household, community and wider political scales.

## ***1.2 Research aims and key questions***

### ***1.2.1 Research aims***

Inspired by these points of interrogation, my research explores the socio-spatial politics of risk and community organising in urban informal settlements in Metro Cebu. I situate my efforts to understand how gendered subjectivities, ideologies and identities feature in respondents' everyday encounters with, and interpretations of, risk and risk management, within the realm of feminist political ecology; a school of thought identifies gender as a critical variable informing access to, and control over, resources (including land), and knowledge production about environmental issues (Elmhirst, 2011; Elmhirst and Resurreccion, 2008; Rocheleau et al., 1996). Despite the centrality of community organising to urban governance and 'pro-poor' development in the Philippines, and, of female participation therein, attention to causes and consequences of gendered participation in these local institutions has been largely neglected. Rather, the limited literature that does exist on community-based disaster risk reduction and management (CBDRRM) evaluates the local implementation and impacts of 'technical' risk mitigation or activities specifically concerned with preparedness and response for major calamitous events, including local knowledge transfer, community mapping and early warning and emergency response systems (Allen, 2006; Delica-Willison, 2003; Delica-Willison and Gaillard, 2012; Fernandez et al., 2012; Gaillard, 2015; Matthies, 2017). Although these are unquestionably important, I argue that these are but a few of the actual (disaster) risk management practices that urban poor communities, and women particularly, are engaging in.

In an effort to address this lacuna, I employ oral and visual feminist participatory methods to elicit respondents' personal accounts and experiences of risk, and uncover the meanings ascribed to and motivating individual participation in homeowner associations and related risk reduction activities. Seeking to counter dominant epistemological hierarchies prominent in objectivist (and arguably masculinist) approaches to research on risk, climate change and urban development, such methods, which explicitly engage with politics of knowledge production and the positionality of knowledge-maker(s) in both process and effect (Duran, 1991) and which actively encourage meaningful respondent participation within the research process, are especially well suited to capturing the

complexities and nuances embedded within individual (and collective) experiences. In my analysis of respondent narratives, I have paid particular attention to the gendered dynamics of power (or more specifically empowerment), representation and resistance<sup>2</sup> embedded within, and emanating from these spaces. I reflect on what insights these relational subtleties might offer about broader socio-spatial politics of risk and community organising among urban poor informal settlers living in so-called ‘danger zones’.

A central argument of my thesis is that risk and insecurity are fundamental drivers underpinning the establishment of, and crucially, gendered engagement in, urban poor homeowner associations (see Chapter 6). I substantiate this claim by showing how gender shapes people’s perceptions of, exposure and responses to different forms of risk and insecurity, and members’ situated knowledges, identities and interests concerning, risk, risk management, and participation in volunteerism more broadly. My framing of these issues positions housing at the heart of urban DRRM discussions, revealing the deeply embedded relationship between insecurity of shelter and tenure and events traditionally conceived of as disasters (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). In so doing, I seek to broaden our knowledge and understanding of risk and disaster, which hitherto have been dominated by stereotypically (white/Global North) male, technocratic interests in science and securitisation (Denton, 2002; MacGregor, 2009: 132; Terry, 2009), that have caricatured if not completely disregarded the (gendered) experiences of those most affected.

Another key argument stemming from this analysis is that encounters with risk (and disaster) constitute an everyday rather than exceptional reality for urban informal settlers (see Chapters 4 and 5). This is why throughout this thesis, the term disaster often appears in brackets, so as not to conflate or render invisible ‘everyday risks’ and risk management activities through the label of disaster. As discussed above in the context of research into CBDRRM, the term disaster carries particular connotations and assumptions that inform what is included and excluded from the discussion. As such, a fundamental aim of my research is to make a case for integrating considerations of everyday risk (see also Allen et al., 2015; Bull-Kamanga et al., 2003; Ruszczuk, 2018; Ziervogel et al., 2017) and risk

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis, my analytical interests in power lie not in conceptualising and unpicking its meaning or intricacies, but rather in critically appraising the spaces and processes through which power relations are transformed towards more (or possibly less) equitable ends. By power relations I am referring to the exchanges between groups, individuals or institutions that have the authority, legitimacy and capacity to express and achieve their interests, and those who do not. I am also concerned with the socio-cultural, political and structural conditions underpinning these inequalities and the vulnerability of certain groups to various forms of risk. It is in this light that issues of representation (i.e. identity) and resistance become paramount.

management into DRRM and resilience-building scholarship and practice. Not only does the lens of 'the everyday' draw out the multiple and intersecting social, political and structural drivers of endangerment and vulnerability, reinforcing risk and disasters as a continuum (ibid.; see also Satterthwaite et al., 2007:13), but to uncover 'the everyday' necessitates engagement with grassroots perspectives and experiences (Ruszczuk, 2017) that are all too often silenced or excluded in DRRM and CCA agendas. This latter point is especially critical given that risk and vulnerability are subjective, socially and spatially contingent conditions (Wisner et al., 2004), and relatedly, as my findings indicate, are gendered in both perception and experience (see also Bradshaw and Fordham, 2013; Chant and McIlwaine, 2016; Enarson, 1998; Enarson et al., 2007; Fordham, 1999). Herein, I consider how gendered subjectivities interact with other forms of social difference to define shared and distinct socio-spatial realities and 'riskscapes' (Blok, 2016; Morello-Frosch et al., 2001; Morello-Frosch and Shenassa, 2006; Müller-Mahn and Everts, 2013; Neisser, 2014; Sutherland et al., 2012), drawing attention to the tensions, negotiations and contestations that exist therein. I employ the concept of 'riskscapes' in recognition of the unequal geographies of environmental risk and justice across classed and gendered lines, and understand it to encompass the multiple socio-spatial configurations of risk produced through interacting social, material and environmental conditions. As summarised by Neisser (2014: 101, citing Appadurai, 1998), the suffix '-scape' alludes to the dynamic and fluid, yet subjectively situated and seemingly static character of these relationships.

Relatedly, given that women constitute such a high proportion of the 'volunteers' on which these initiatives depend, an appraisal of the gendered consequences arising from participation in these spaces is crucial to ensuring that CBDRRM and so called 'resilience-building' interventions are as 'inclusive' and 'empowering' as they claim (or aspire) to be. I thus reflect on the individual and collective impacts associated with female participation in homeowner associations, focusing within this analysis on the extent to which these organisations are facilitating positive transformations in gender and class relations within and across different domains (see Chapter 6). As my research demonstrates, homeowner associations are useful sites for unpicking the complex and seemingly paradoxical gendered dynamics entangled in CBDRRM and other 'bottom-up' development processes reliant on local participation. In my analysis of the various manifestations of empowerment that emerge from participation in homeowner associations, I adopt Kabeer's (2010: 106) definition of empowerment as the processes by which those denied the capacity to make strategic life choices and exercise influence (i.e. power), acquire it, and also look to the broader conceptual model recently developed by Eerdewijk et al. (2017), which I discuss in

more detail below. I also engage with Chant's (2008) construct of the 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' in my evaluation of the terms and implications of women's inclusion in local risk management and resilience building activities. Chant refers to the process wherein traditional gender roles and female-oriented norms of altruism are perpetuated by development programmes, leaving poor women increasingly liable for both coping with, and addressing, their circumstances of poverty.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, an understanding of these local socio-spatial dynamics cannot be fully developed without considering the broader political landscape in which they are situated. As Griffin et al. (2017: 1) assert, although there are numerous studies 'focusing on environmental justice in urban areas and on resilience in cities of the Global South, surprisingly few... have explored (in)justices and power relationships produced by governing efforts to realise resilience'. Following the rich theoretical contributions from Zeiderman's (2016) ethnographic study of risk governance in Bogotá, Colombia, I respond to this call by analysing the political economy of disaster risk in Metro Cebu. Specifically, I try to uncover how DRRM features in broader urban development processes and politics to shape or reconfigure the city. I analyse interactions between the state, private developers, civil society, and urban poor communities around matters of (disaster) risk management, infrastructure, land tenure insecurity and disaster-induced displacement and resettlement, paying particular attention to how these issues are framed and approached by different stakeholders, and to what effect. Reinforcing my argument about the significance of 'the everyday' over 'the exceptional', I reveal how a focus on 'disasters' and 'climate change' can serve to depoliticise discussions of risk by concealing the socio-political and structural drivers of vulnerability, deflecting attention away from the power configurations and actors complicit in its production (see Chapter 5). My interrogation of these broader political dynamics showcases how disaster 'resilience' and 'pro-poor development' are often mobilised to serve elite commercial interests and legitimise the removal of slums, identifying a new manifestation of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2003) taking place in Philippine cities (and possibly extending to other disaster-affected countries). When these dynamics are considered alongside my findings of the gendered politics shaping grassroots activities, it becomes clear that adopting a siloed focus on large-scale

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<sup>3</sup> Bradshaw's (2001, 2002, 2013: 155) observations in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in Nicaragua, suggest similar dynamics may also be transferring to the realm of disaster management, with women bearing the brunt of the burdens for 'building back better'.

catastrophic events obscures gendered and classed realities, and thereby limits the efficacy of DRRM interventions.

### **1.1.3 Research questions**

To address these research aims, my thesis is framed around the following key questions and sub-questions:

#### **How do urban informal settlers living in disaster-prone areas perceive and experience risk (and disaster)?**

- How do perceptions and experiences of risk differ between women and men (if at all)?
- To what extent do these perceptions and experiences align with popular articulations of risk ascribed to ‘danger zones’ and informal settlements more generally?

#### **How is (D)RRM discourse, policy and practice embedded in the wider political economy of urban development in Metro Cebu?**

- How are the ‘riskscapes’ of informal settlements interpreted and expressed by state agencies?
- What kinds of policies and programmes are being implemented under the rubric of DRRM?
- How are disaster risk governance efforts reconfiguring the city?

#### **How do informal settlers living in danger zones engage in risk management activities and to what effect?**

- What roles and responsibilities do women and men assume in local (disaster) risk management activities and how do gender relations feature within potential divisions of labour?
- What motivates individual actions and initiatives in CB(D)RRM?
- How does participation in CB(D)RRM challenge and/or reproduce gendered and classed power relations, and to what effect?

As depicted in my thesis outline below, my three empirical chapters are oriented around these key questions in the order outlined above. However, given the complex and mutually

constitutive nature of these questions and their answers, my analysis of each theme is not confined to a single chapter, but rather develops throughout the thesis as new findings are presented which hold relevance to previous arguments.

In an effort to better understand the situated realities and gendered politics of risk and community organising in urban informal settlements, I undertook seven months of mixed method ethnographic fieldwork during multiple visits between December 2014 and December 2017. During this period, I conducted 20 semi-structured preliminary interviews with a range of organisations and individuals working in DRRM and/or social development sectors, eleven focus group discussions with a total of 61 informal settlers, and a further 62 in-depth interviews, 44 with informal settlers (50 percent of whom participated in the focus groups), and 18 with people working for government and civil society organisations (see Chapter 3). This was supplemented by the wealth of insights gained from the many hours spent with respondents in their homes and communities. Focus group discussions, interviews and informal conversations with community members were translated verbatim by my research assistant, Regina Yoma, an anthropology student who accompanied me throughout the duration of my fieldwork (see Chapter 3 for more on translation).<sup>4</sup> In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss my rationale for selecting Metro Cebu as a study site, concluding with a brief overview of the subsequent chapters.

### ***1.3 Why Metro Cebu, the Philippines?***

#### ***1.3.1 Urban risk in the Philippines***

Urban populations around the world are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Although the exact cause of global warming remains a topic of contentious debate, the reality of unprecedented increases in mean annual global temperatures witnessed in recent decades is undeniable. Rising sea levels and an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, droughts and wildfires are but a few examples of how changing climate patterns have been materialising (Mirza, 2003; van Aalst, 2006); often with devastating consequences for affected populations. While weather-related hazards are globally occurring phenomena which have the potential to cause significant adverse impacts on both human society and the natural environment (Bradshaw,

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<sup>4</sup> All quotes included in my thesis are from original interviews or conversations, and verbatim unless otherwise stated.

2013: 2–3; UNISDR, 2009), the distribution of disasters resulting from these events is far from uniform.

Despite their far smaller contribution to global carbon dioxide emissions (Dodman, 2009), Global South countries have paradoxically absorbed the majority of costs associated with climate-related hazards, with spending on damages caused by global warming proportionally 20 times greater than higher income countries (Mirza, 2003: 233). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2014: 20), ‘these growing threats most affect poor people and poor communities: 98 percent of those killed and affected by natural disasters are from developing countries’ and by 2025, more than half of these populations may be vulnerable to floods and storms. In both the Philippines and globally, much of the devastation resulting from natural hazards is increasingly experienced in cities (Bartlett et al., 2009; Dodman et al., 2009; Moser and Satterthwaite, 2010). Since 2008, more the half of the world’s population has resided in urban areas, three-quarters of whom are living in low- and middle-income countries (Revi et al., 2014: 541). This urbanisation has been accompanied by a growing number of informal settlements, with Asia alone accounting for 61 percent of the global slum population (Banerjee et al., 2014: 5). Many cities of lower and middle-income countries such as the Philippines are also anticipated to absorb large proportions of future population growth (Cohen, 2006: 63; McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2014: 10–12). In fact, the UN predicts that all future population growth will be experienced in cities (Satterthwaite, 2007: 5), and that the world’s urban population will grow by more than two-thirds by 2050, with Asia and Africa’s urban population projected to account for 90 percent of this 2.5 billion increase (UNDESA, 2014: 1,12).

While the majority of Filipinos continue to reside in rural areas, urbanisation levels are rapidly catching up, with 47 percent of the population estimated to be living in urban areas (World Bank, 2018b), 38.3 percent of whom are living in overcrowded informal settlements (UNSD, 2015). As discussed, the latter are especially vulnerable to meteorological hazards (Balgos, 2016; Bankoff, 2003: 73; HDN, 2013). In turn, and compounding this situation, reduced opportunities in subsistence agriculture, ongoing depletion of fish stocks and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns affecting the reliability of many rural livelihoods make it highly probable that many of those seeking refuge and security will head to urban destinations, with much evidence of migration serving as an adaptive strategy for Filipinos during times of crisis, witnessed since the

1980s as historically observed by Chant and McIlwaine, (1995), Findley (1987), Lauby and Stark (1988) and Trager (1988) (see also UNESCO et al., 2018).<sup>5</sup>

The shift towards a more urban society has in some cases, been rapid and unbalanced, resulting in the emergence of megacities.<sup>6</sup> Urbanisation in the Philippines has followed a similar trajectory, with its capital city, Metro Manila, hosting an estimated 21,241,000 residents (Balgos, 2016: 179). Though Manila is predicted to continue to grow over the next 50 years (albeit at a slower pace), metropolitan centres such as Cebu, Davao and other regional capitals are attracting a growing number of migrants from around the country, making them increasingly important to the social and economic development of the archipelago. Given the growing proportion of the Philippine (and global) population residing in urban centres, pre-emptive planning to address the vulnerability of cities to climate-related hazards is gaining traction internationally, as evidenced in SDGs 9, 11 and 13 on urban resilience, DRRM and climate action, and in UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda which recognises CCA and DRRM as emerging urban development challenges (see discussion in Chapter 2). Nonetheless, in comparison with the attention afforded to rural areas by national and international organisations focusing on DRRM, urban areas remain relatively neglected (Satterthwaite et al., 2007) bar in the aftermath of localised disasters. Assertions by Lipton (1977) of an entrenched 'urban bias' within the development sector seem to have gone amiss in the case of CCA and DRRM.

In the Philippines, considerations of urban environments in the realm of national (and international) DRRM policy, investment and scholarship have focused overwhelmingly on Metro Manila, with Tacloban unsurprisingly attracting a considerable amount of attention since Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013 (see for example Bowen, 2015; Cranmer and Biddinger, 2014; Duijsens and Faling, 2014; Ngatu et al., 2015; Reyes and Lu, 2015; Salazar, 2015). Outside these two cities, the bulk of DRRM research remains largely focused on rural areas, leaving the realities and challenges facing the country's expanding 'secondary' urban centres at the periphery of these discussions. Heeding Robinson's (2006: 1) assertion that 'all cities are best understood as ordinary' and serve as interesting sites for advancing our understanding of 'the urban' (see also Robinson and Roy, 2016), Metro Cebu's stature as a growing secondary city, and, its position outside the disaster limelight, makes it an interesting arena for exploring alternative narratives and ways of thinking

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<sup>5</sup> On the importance of international migration, see Pratt et al., (2017) and Tadiar (2004, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Cities with populations of over 10 million people. At present, there are 28 megacities globally, the majority of which are located in Asia (UNDESA, 2014: 1, 14)

about risk and risk governance through the lens of the everyday. My decision has also been influenced by Roy's (ibid., 2009, 2011) calls for developing 'new geographies of theory' that stretch beyond the 'global' and 'modern' city narratives and loci that have dominated urban theorisations thus far.

### ***1.3.2 Poverty and precarity in Metro Cebu***

Metro Cebu in the Central Visayas, is the oldest urban centre in the Philippines and the second largest urban agglomeration after Metro Manila. The wider administrative metropolitan zone is comprised of seven cities and six municipalities collectively housing a total population of over 2.8 million (OECD, 2017), of which over 1.5 million are living in the three so-called 'highly urbanised cities'<sup>7</sup> of Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu, and Mandaue City (with populations of 922,611, 362,654 and 410,112 respectively according to the 2015 census). In addition to being a key hub for island-hopping tourists, the metropole's Mactan Export Processing Zone (EPZ) and growing business process outsourcing sector have also made Cebu an attractive destination for both highly and less-skilled Filipino migrants seeking an employment alternative to Manila. However, a limited availability of affordable accommodation, coupled with high levels of underemployment, has relegated approximately 41,000 households (205,000 people) to living in informal settlements, over 10,000 of which are located along riverbanks and other waterways that are very exposed to various hydro-meteorological hazards (Semilla, 2015a). As noted by the local NGO FORGE (2014: 5), Metro Cebu has also absorbed a large number of migrants coming from areas affected by Typhoon Yolanda, including the north of the island and neighbouring provinces.

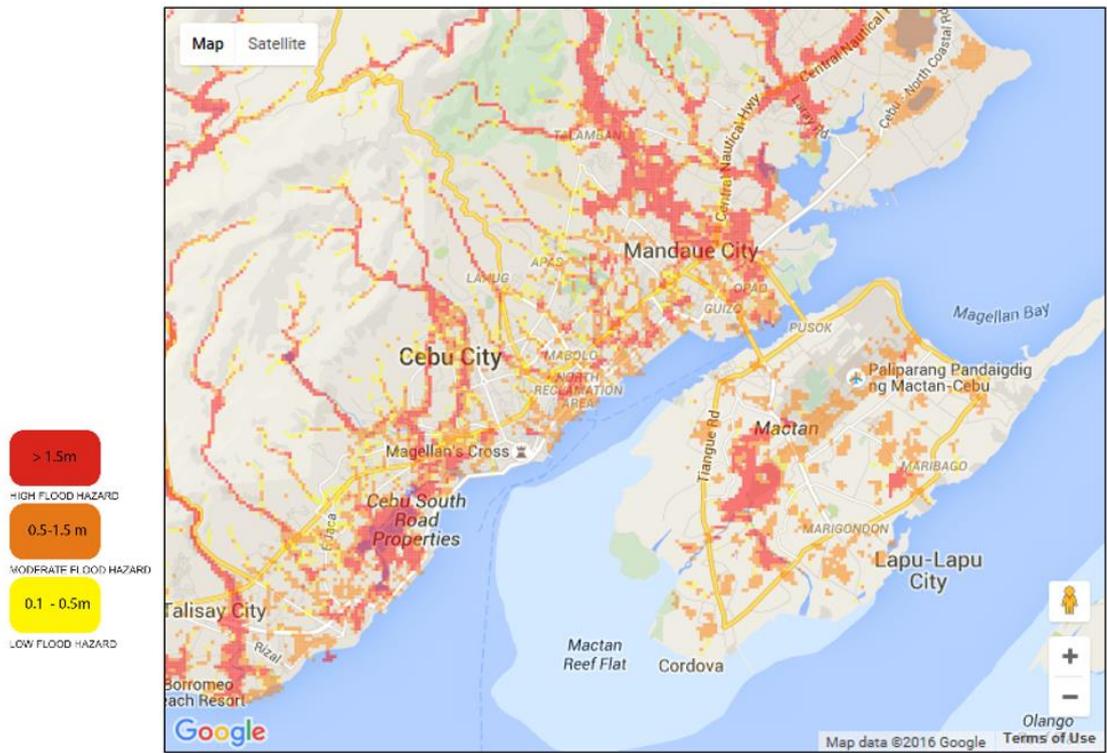
During the rainy season, which in Cebu generally runs from June to November, flooding up to depths of three metres is common, affecting those who live and work in lower lying parts of the city in particular (See Figure 1.1). Since 1990, when Typhoon Ruping destroyed 60 percent of Cebu City (Bankoff, 1999: 388), compared with the northern part of the province and its neighbouring islands to the east, this regional capital has been largely spared from the ravages of recent typhoons. Two weeks prior to Yolanda, a major earthquake (the strongest the country had seen in 23 years) in neighboring Bohol, also left the metropole with only limited damage. That said, its close proximity to seismic activity

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<sup>7</sup> In the Philippines, cities are differentially classified for governance purposes according to the size of their population and economy, with the term 'highly urbanised' or 'independent' applied to any city with over 200,000 inhabitants and whose economy generates at least fifty million pesos annually. These cities report directly to the national government, while those outside that category sit within the jurisdiction of their respective provincial governments (see also Chapter 3 discussion on site selection).

and the high number of tropical storms that frequent the island mean that residents of Metro Cebu are regularly on high alert for flash floods, landslides and storm surge in the coastal areas, making climate-related risks a part of daily life.

Figure 1.1: Flood Hazard Map of Metro Cebu



Source: <http://www.nababaha.com/flood/cebu/cebu.htm> (accessed 10 May, 2016).

Recognising the numerous social and environmental hazards affecting Metro Cebu’s growing population of informal settlers, both national and local governments have initiated various social protection, slum upgrading and resettlement programmes alongside wider emergency preparedness and DRRM interventions, directly and indirectly branded as fostering the development of resilient cities and communities (see Chapter 5). These interventions depend on the collective efforts of local government units (LGUs), civil society and community-based or people’s organisations<sup>8</sup>, with the latter in turn reliant on the cooperation and participation of its members (Putzel, 1998: 78). In many informal settlements, such organisations often take the shape of homeowner associations (see

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<sup>8</sup> These membership-based organisations may include local community associations, women’s organisations or other sector-specific interest groups, cooperatives, peasant groups and trade unions, but exclude other professional or business associations, NGOs and base Christian communities (Putzel, 1998: 78; see also Clarke, 1998: 3).

Chapter 3 for more discussion) whose membership base typically numbers between 20 and a few hundred households, bound by their geographic proximity, their circumstances of land tenure insecurity and their status as structure owners (despite not owning the land).

The prominence and function of homeowner associations in urban poor communities are intimately connected with the archipelago's long history of community organising and collective action, which was consolidated in the 1970s and 80s as progressive groups united in resistance to the Marcos dictatorship (Constantino-David, 1985, 1995; Shatkin, 2000, 2007).<sup>9</sup> During this period marked by repressive state violence against any signs of political activism, church-based organisations following the principles of pro-poor liberation theology and inspired the ideas of Saul Alinsky and Paolo Freire on community organising and conscientization respectively, began working to fill the gaps in health, education and livelihood programming as NGOs were shut down or forced underground. Mobilising the poor towards collective action through principles of consciousness-raising, self-reliance, participation and empowerment (Dizon, 2012), these community organising activities are seen to have laid the foundations for the success of the non-violent People Power Revolution that put an end to the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, and to the robust civil society sector that has emerged since. Women, including missionaries and grassroots leaders, were central to these organising efforts, building on a long history of female activism in nationalist movements and colonial resistance, and continue to play an active role in political movements relating inter alia to labour, land reform and women's rights (Friesen, 1989; Roces, 2010).

Building on this tradition of grassroots collective action, community organising efforts in urban poor communities often result in the establishment of homeowner associations, which in addition to offering informal settlers a certain legitimacy and visibility, also serve as an important platform from which they are able to lobby the state for resources and contest policies and practices that adversely or unfairly affect them, including efforts to displace them. Within their remit of working to address local needs and issues, homeowner associations have also become a venue for local disaster risk management interventions. Interestingly, Bankoff (2007) suggests a direct link between a community's exposure and vulnerability to hazards and the emergence of what he terms 'mutual benefit associations' or social capital networks, raising the question of whether the

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<sup>9</sup> See also <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/54a/063.html>.

surge in homeowner associations in recent years is in some way related to an increase in actual or perceived vulnerability among residents.

Although the decision to establish and participate in an association ultimately lies with the residents themselves, communities are often encouraged and supported to do so by partner NGOs and the LGU. Theoretically speaking, such a set-up suggests the existence of a partially (if not completely) functional model of cooperative governance, though with notable exclusions given that renters and extended family members do not qualify as 'homeowners' and are thus unable to join an association. However, as Bankoff and Hilhorst (2009: 3) critically conclude in their study of disaster management in the Bicol region of southern Luzon, 'different political interpretations of risk reduction often remain concealed behind the façade of a shared language of disaster response' and concern for those most affected. They found that government efforts tended to focus on helping communities to regain a state of 'normalcy' and recover the social order that existed prior to the event, while the responses of grassroots organisations were motivated by a more transformative politics which sought to change the social and political structures that rendered certain groups vulnerable to the disaster in the first place (ibid.: 10-13).

As I discuss in Chapter 5, evidence of a similar rift between state and citizen perspectives are also apparent in Metro Cebu's slum demolition and resettlement programmes, which are being imposed on communities of informal settlers in the name of DRRM (Bunachita, 2014a, 2014b; Mendoza, 2016; Philippines Star, 2010) and urban beautification (Angeles, 2015; Bunachita, 2016; Freeman, 2016; Matus, 2016; Mendoza, 2015; Semilla, 2015b); an experience common to many cities across Asia (Barnett and Webber, 2010; Ghertner, 2008; 2011; Kusno, 2011). When presented with the possibility of resettlement, many households residing in areas classified as 'high risk' prefer to stay and take their chances with the unpredictable forces of nature over the uncertainties associated with relocation. As Taylor (2013: 16) describes in relation to riverbank settlements in Indonesian cities, 'in many instances, residents accept and have adopted means of living with a degree of risk. In such cases, relocation may increase the vulnerability of households in other ways, for example by breaking social ties and moving people away from their sources of income.' In the case of Bogotá, Zeiderman (2013: 11) observes that '*zonas de alto riesgo*' are actually attracting new residents who hope to benefit from the status and state protections awarded to those officially recognised as belonging to this 'vulnerable' population. These trade-offs in risk and insecurity, and the conflicts and co-optation that emerge amidst competing interests and perspectives underscore the subjective, socio-political essence of risk and vulnerability in the public imagination.

In both urban and rural Philippines (as elsewhere globally), DRRM narratives, resources and attention tend to be monopolised by a focus on major calamitous events or ‘intensive risks’, owing to conventional definitions of disasters framed by high mortality levels and/or significant material and economic losses (see Chapter 2). Consequently, DRRM policy and practice concentrates almost exclusively on preventing deaths and minimising the damages incurred from the more extreme spectrum of events. However as Dodman et al. (2009: 6) highlight, for people living in slums, the adverse effects and number of deaths caused by everyday or ‘extensive risks’ are typically underestimated and likely present a greater source of stress and vulnerability to people’s livelihoods and well-being. Despite the unquestionable importance of pre-emptively working to minimise human casualties and material losses, my stance is that focusing attention on large-scale calamities tends to overemphasise the significance the ‘event’ in itself, making slow-onset disasters and everyday risks more invisible despite their damaging and disruptive consequences in the longer term (Hewitt, 1997: 34–6).

Furthermore, given the high levels of poverty, stretched public services and land and housing shortages common to many South East Asian cities, while it is possible that new and unforeseen risks will emerge from global warming, it seems likely that the main impacts of climate change will be an exacerbation of existing hazards and developmental challenges (Bartlett et al., 2009; Dodman, 2009; Dodman et al., 2009). This is even more the case when the numbers of urban dwellers living in slums are considered, who, as previously mentioned, are often highly exposed and less able to protect themselves from anthropogenic and environmental hazards (Bartlett et al., 2009; Dodman et al., 2009; Moser and Satterthwaite, 2010). Declining water availability, food insecurity driven by reduced crop yields due to drought and/or flooding, and the health consequences associated with air pollution and the spread of vector- and/or water-borne diseases are just a few examples of slow-onset, or ‘everyday disasters’ that are becoming more pronounced with global warming and which are likely to predominantly affect low-income groups (Dodman et al., 2009; Lelieveld et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2002). Inspired by the work of Dodman et al. (2009) and Hewitt (1997) among others (see Chapter 2), while my research both recognises and considers the significance of events that would otherwise be traditionally defined as ‘disasters’, it consciously seeks to reorient the focus away from less frequent large scale events, towards everyday encounters with risk and insecurity as experienced by the urban poor.

Metro Cebu is more typical of the realities and challenges facing ‘ordinary cities’ in the Global South, than for example Metro Manila, where urban challenges are exacerbated

by its 'mega' population, or Tacloban, where the incursion of humanitarian relief and resources from international NGOs following Typhoon Yolanda have altered the landscape of local politics and urban development. Moreover, while Metro Cebu has not been acutely affected by any major disaster since the 1990s, its close proximity to several prominent disaster-affected areas in northern Cebu and neighbouring Bohol, and designated authority owing to its status as a regional capital, has positioned Metro Cebu at the heart of DRR and urban resilience-building discussions. In fact, the city -region has come to be renowned both nationally and internationally as an 'exemplary centre' (Kusno, 2010) of DRRM best practice, having won the prestigious United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction in 2011, and earning itself the title of 'Most Resilient Province' in the 2017 national *Gawad KALASAG*<sup>10</sup> awards celebrating excellence in DRRM.

In short, it is these combined characteristics of Metro Cebu as a secondary (though significant) urban centre that has escaped the damaging effects of recent large scale weather-related catastrophes, but for whom climate-related hazards pose a very real threat, that have informed my rationale for choosing it as my study site. My research focuses on the two largest and most populous cities of Cebu City and Mandaue City (see Chapter 3 for more details on site selection). Both Cebu City and Mandaue City also have a growing population of informal settlers, many of whom are living in areas deemed to be at high risk of flooding, storm surge, landslides, and/or fires, and who live with a constant threat of demolition. By employing feminist methods and modes of analysis sensitive to gendered (and broader) subjectivities and hierarchies within the field and the research process itself, this study heeds the complex and overlapping dimensions of perception, power and inequality as they shape the experiences and behaviours of individuals, households and communities affected by different but interconnected forms of insecurity. While the individual perceptions and community dynamics described in this thesis are drawn from a small population of urban poor informal settlers, the wider structural circumstances and processes contributing to the production of risk in informal settlements and associated risk governance efforts are common to many cities in the Philippines and globally, suggesting

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<sup>10</sup> *Gawad KALASAG* is a national excellence framework, developed and mandated by the National Disaster Coordinating Council with the intention of protecting or shielding (*kalasag* being the Filipino term for 'shield') high risk communities from hazards by encouraging participation of various stakeholders in designing and implementing Disaster Risk Management (DRRM) programme (see

[https://www.preventionweb.net/files/10875\\_gawadkalasagguidelines20081.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/10875_gawadkalasagguidelines20081.pdf)).

that aspects of my findings are likely to be relevant to other densely-populated urban centres affected by climate related hazards.

### ***1.4 Thesis structure***

Having introduced the context, aims, research questions and rationale for basing my research in Metro Cebu, Chapter 2 sets out my conceptual framework, which I locate within the broad field of feminist urban political ecology. To ground my empirical analysis of gendered risk and participation in informal settler homeowner associations, I draw on scholarship from critical disaster studies, gender and development (GAD) and urban geography. In Chapter two, I summarise the key debates from these distinct bodies of literature, highlighting how gaps in knowledge might be addressed through a more interdisciplinary conversation. I also make a case for focusing on everyday risk within (and separate to) appraisals of the 'exceptional'. This lens, I argue, helps to advance our understanding of the subjective encounters with chronic stresses and structural inequalities that create and reinforce conditions of vulnerability. Without an understanding of the interactions between extensive and intensive risks, and the power hierarchies embedded within these dynamics, DRRM and resilience-building initiatives are unlikely to progress towards their stated aims. Given the extent to which the rhetoric of participation and empowerment have permeated CBDRRM discourse in the Philippines, an examination of these processes and their outcomes is also of critical importance.

Chapter 3 details the feminist epistemological principles that have inspired my research methodology and methods. These values are inextricably tied to the broader objectives of this study and to the theories that I engage with in my analysis of gendered and classed embodiments of risk and risk governance. Sharing my reflections on the research process as whole, including how my positionality shaped my experiences in the field and the limitations of the study, I also introduce the five study sites where the bulk of my fieldwork was conducted, this information serving as context to my empirical chapters which draw on examples and testimonies from these communities to illustrate the themes and issues being unpacked.

Chapter 4 examines how issues of risk, insecurity and disaster are framed and understood by urban poor informal settlers. In my analysis, I pay particular attention to the ways in which gendered subjectivities, ideologies and identities feature within respondents' everyday encounters with, and interpretations of risk. Decentring traditional conceptualisations of urban (disaster) risk, their narratives reveal that it is not the large scale events classified as disasters in the mainstream that dominate the minds of the urban

poor living in 'danger zones', but rather the daily challenges of survival under conditions of incessant financial, livelihood and land tenure insecurity. Highlighting the intimate relationship between intensive (exceptional) and extensive (everyday) risks, I show how gendered and classed inequalities materialise in educational attainment and livelihood opportunities. These, in turn, affect one's access to housing, land tenure security, and exposure to health hazards, including interpersonal violence, and those associated with local environmental conditions and infrastructural neglect. I argue that endorsing and propagating a language of 'disaster' inadvertently frames risk as unforeseeable, unpreventable and exceptional, deflecting attention away from the 'everyday' risks that have a greater impact on people's day-to-day well-being, while also critically obscuring the ways in which the Philippine state and other actors are directly implicated in the production of vulnerability in urban poor communities.

This latter point frames much of the discussion in Chapter 5 which considers the political economy of risk affecting informal settlers in Metro Cebu. Here, I reveal the micropolitics informing access to infrastructure and public services and how these translate to gendered embodiments of risk. I argue that risk and efforts to govern risk operate through an exclusionary politics that delineates urban poor populations and spaces as risky, illegal and undesirable, and draw attention to the ways in which electoral politics and urban development interventions are directly implicated in the production of the 'riskscapes' in informal settlements that I introduced in Chapter 4. I develop these arguments further by analysing the Mega Cebu urban development project, to show how temporal visions of resilience, sustainability and associated technologies of DRRM are entangled in modernising aspirations, and how these agendas are reconfiguring the socio-spatial terrain of the Metro area.

Chapter 6 reveals the strategies and modes of political engagement adopted by informal settlers within this context to address and contest their circumstances of risk and insecurity. Identifying homeowner associations as playing a central role in local risk management, I analyse individual motivations driving participation, and the effects these spaces of local action are having on personal and collective labour burdens, agency and consciousness, as well as on wider socio-political structures and hierarchies underpinning gendered and classed vulnerabilities to risks. I argue that grassroots 'resilience-building' and CBDRM are decidedly gendered in practice, and expose complex dynamics whereby participation in these activities is reinforcing gendered inequalities and power differentials while simultaneously facilitating positive personal transformations among female members. Chapter 7 concludes this thesis by summarising the main findings of my research

and how these contribute to advancing existing debates, policies and practices concerning gender, urban (disaster) risk and 'resilience-building'. Highlighting the limitations of this study, I also consider areas for future research that build on these findings.

## **2 Engendering studies of urban (disaster) risk and resilience**

The conceptual foundations of my research are grounded in an understanding of (disaster) risk, vulnerability and resilience as subjective social and political constructs, differentially defined and experienced, often on the basis of identity-based marginalisations including age, gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Wisner et al., 2004). My analysis of the socio-spatial gendered and classed politics of (disaster) risk in urban informal settlements engages, accordingly, with critical disaster scholarship that problematises framings of disasters as inherently 'natural' through the vulnerability paradigm (Bankoff, 1999, 2004; Bankoff et al., 2015; Cardona, 2003; Hewitt, 1983, 1997, 2005; Lewis and Kelman, 2012; Oliver-Smith, 2004; Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 2002; Wisner et al., 2004, 2012). This body of literature also offers important insights into the specific ways in which disasters have historically, and continue, to shape Philippine culture and politics (Bankoff, 2003a, 2003b, 2007; Bankoff and Hilhorst, 2009; Gaillard, 2008, 2015; Luna, 2001). However, I broaden this field of work in my call for directing greater attention towards 'everyday' rather than 'exceptional' risks. As argued below, a lens of everyday risk (Allen et al., 2015; Bull-Kamanga et al., 2003; Ziervogel et al., 2017) gives visibility to the recurrent crises and persistent conditions of insecurity afflicting urban poor informal settlers, the analysis of which directs attention to the complex dynamics and actors implicated in the political economy of (disaster) risk in Metro Cebu.

In my efforts to unpick the gendered politics of urban (disaster) risk, land tenure insecurity, and participation in community organising, I adopt an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, drawing insights from the field of critical disaster studies, as well as from gender and development (GAD) and urban geography. I bring these distinct bodies of literature into conversation with one another through a feminist political ecology framework (see Elmhirst, 2011; Elmhirst and Resurreccion, 2008; Rocheleau et al., 1996), acknowledging their complementarities and divergences to advance more nuanced understandings and theorisations of the socio-spatial politics and embodiments of urban risk. I situate my evaluation of these processes within contemporary debates about (disaster) risk vulnerability, resilience, gender, and urban development, and reveal the importance of working across disciplinary boundaries to address contemporary urban development issues in a manner which is attentive to matters of social justice.

## ***2.1 Disasters, risk and vulnerability***

### ***2.1.1 Defining disasters***

Disasters associated with natural hazards such as earthquakes, typhoons and floods have long been conceptualised as one in the same; naturally occurring phenomena portrayed by governments and the media as ‘Acts of God’, resulting in deleterious consequences for their unfortunate victims. Framings of these calamitous events as driven by natural forces that are unrelated to human activities, have, in Western ontology, been traced back to early Greco-Roman Christian constructions of ‘hazards as disorder – as interruptions or violations of order’ that position nature and humankind as separate worlds at odds with one another (Oliver-Smith, 2004: 12–3). However portrayals of extreme meteorological events as emanating from celestial or uncontrollable forces are not confined to European traditions. Rather, links between nature and the spiritual realm are fundamental to the beliefs and practices of many cultures around the world.

In the Philippines, where over 90 percent of the population is Christian (primarily Roman Catholic) and believe in God as a supreme moral and spiritual entity, and less than one percent of the population identifies as atheist or agnostic, nature and the divine often overlap in public interpretations of climatic phenomena (Bankoff, 2004a: 92; Gaillard, 2008). A culmination of both pre-Hispanic indigenous beliefs and Judeo-Christian thinking means that disasters borne from natural hazards are frequently interpreted by Filipinos as ‘manifestations of divine punishment’ (Bankoff, 2004a: 94), or expressions of the wrath of God. As Bankoff (ibid.: 100) describes in his insightful piece on cultural constructions of natural hazards in the archipelago:

‘In the Visayas, these beliefs are often represented in terms of *grasya*, the grace of the supernatural that abounds in the natural environment and that manifests itself in the bounty of Nature, and *gaba*, the curse or punishment of the same for unacceptable behaviour and that is often conceived of as a form of retribution for wrongdoings inflicted on others. In particular, natural hazards are typically depicted as forms of *gaba*, punishment for one’s past actions or sins that fall on the innocent as well as the ‘guilty’.

As an example, 47 percent of the survivors surveyed following the flash floods that devastated the city of Ormoc in 1991 attributed the event to supernatural forces (ibid.: 101). Similar beliefs have also been vocalised in relation to droughts, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, as depicted in the explanations that followed the eruption of Mount Pinatubo earlier that year, which linked the catastrophe to divine retribution (ibid.; see also Chester and Duncan, 2010; Gaillard, 2008: 322). As Bankoff (2004a: 92) contends, the mobilisation of religiosity as an explanation of ‘sudden and unforeseen’ events has also been deployed

strategically by the national government, 'attributing their inaction and lack of political will to address pressing social and economic problems to the excuse of the almost god-like forces of an ungovernable Nature.' In framing disasters as 'natural', the wider historical and social dimensions of 'disaster risk creation' (Lewis and Kelman, 2012) become lost and the only hope of defence for affected parties becomes centrally administered, technocratic solutions designed and controlled by (male dominated, Western) 'expert' knowledge networks (Bankoff, 2003: 11). Such epistemic constructions render local values and perspectives invisible, obscure state failures and accountabilities, and serve as further justification for increased foreign interference (Bankoff, 2004; Hewitt, 1997b). While recognition that extreme weather events do not inevitably produce disasters is gaining traction both within and outside the Philippines, a tradition of conflation continues to dominate popular discourse, as evidenced in the naming of the 1990s as the 'International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction' (Cannon, 1994: 16-7), and in the persistent use of the term 'natural disaster' by the media and scholars alike. Nonetheless, critiques highlighting the limitations of environmentally deterministic definitions of disasters (Bankoff, 1999, 2004; Bankoff et al., 2015; Cardona, 2003; Hewitt, 1983, 1997, 2005; Lewis and Kelman, 2012; Oliver-Smith, 2004; Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 2002; Wisner et al., 2004, 2012) and their associated technocratic solutions (Alston, 2013; Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014; Israel and Sachs, 2013) continue to emphasise disasters as subjective, socio-political constructs.

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) defines a disaster as a 'serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources' (UNISDR, 2009: 9). There are two distinct elements to this definition. One is the aspect of disruption to people's lives associated with material and emotional losses and the other pertains to people's inability to cope with and recover from the adverse impacts that result. These points are crucial in distinguishing natural hazards from disasters since they highlight that the latter are not automatic, inevitable outcomes of the former, but rather, are a product of intersecting social phenomena (Bradshaw, 2013: 1-2; Cannon, 1994; Enarson, 2000; McEntire, 2001) that constrain the ability of certain groups to withstand and recover from these events. According to Cannon (1994: 29), the term disaster implies a level of destruction and/or disruption that is considered extraordinary and which necessitates external assistance for recovery. In this light, subjective perceptions about degrees of

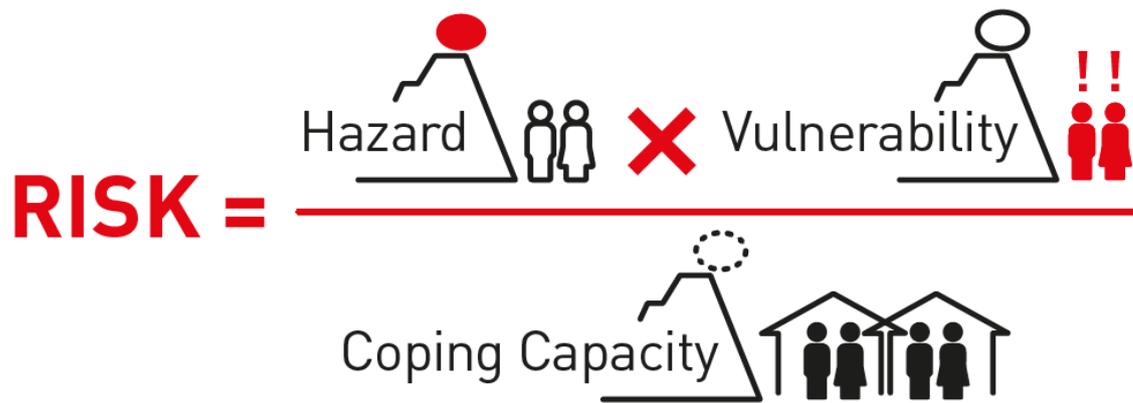
exceptionalism, loss and disorder are fundamental to whether an event is conceived of as a disaster.

International quantifications of what constitutes ‘serious disruption’ and ‘widespread loss’ tend to refer to situations where either mortality levels exceed 10 deaths, over 100 people are affected, or where the government requires external support and declares a state of emergency (Bradshaw, 2013: 3). Disasters therefore depend not only on the destructiveness of a given event, but also on the response capacity and/or willingness of external parties to intervene both during and in its aftermath. What happens when the state has the capacity to respond, but chooses not to? And what about those individuals whose lives are routinely unsettled by economic and environmental shocks, but whose experiences are invisible to those within and outside their communities? Though levels of economic or material damage are purposefully left unspecified in official definitions to account for those with limited material assets, underlying preoccupations with physical valuations of loss and disruption to economic activities fail to capture the broader embodied and psychosocial impacts of such events on different groups. Given my particular interest in how gender and class influence these subjective encounters, and the realities that chronic stresses present for urban poor informal settlers (see Chapter 4), I have found the lens of everyday risks to offer a more relevant and insightful point of entry.

### ***2.1.2 Vulnerability, poverty and everyday risks***

Where disasters are ‘defined by actual damages and losses’, risk encompasses ‘the probability of negative consequences or losses induced by a combination of natural or man-made threats together with conditions of vulnerability, counterbalanced by the capacity or resilience to face and adapt’ (Allen et al., 2015: 2, citing UNISDR, 2009 and Wisner et al., 2004) (see also Figure 2.1). Conceptualised as a state of exposure and defencelessness, vulnerability is produced when external threats merge with internal deficiencies in the capacity of a system or individual to cope with resultant shocks or losses (Adger, 2006: 274; Barrett and Constanas, 2014; Chambers, 1989, 2006: 33; Gallopín, 2006). As my analysis of respondents’ life histories and circumstances of deprivation reveals (see Chapter 4), these ‘deficiencies’ often stem from sustained experiences of discrimination and structural inequality within and across diverse socio-political spaces and scales, which materialise as ‘everyday risks’. Everyday risks emerge from (and simultaneously reinforce) conditions of ‘poverty, underdevelopment and human structural insecurity which jeopardises and limits human development’ (Lavell et al., 2003: 70) and (re)produces ‘highly inequitable cycles of displacement and exposure’ which Allen et al. (2015: 1) refer to as ‘urban risk traps’.

Figure 2.1 Defining risk



Source: Allen et al. (2015:2, Figure 1)

Vulnerability analysis offers an important entry point for thinking about the unequal distributions of everyday risks and disasters between and within populations (Cannon, 1994; Füssel, 2007; Helmer and Hilhorst, 2006). However, labels of vulnerability must be approached with caution since they frequently misrepresent and oversimplify the experiences and realities of those being categorised. For example, although poverty is often an indicator of increased vulnerability, it is important to stress that poverty and vulnerability are not one in the same, given that ‘[a]lthough poor people are usually among the most vulnerable, not all vulnerable people are poor’ (Moser, 1998: 3). Similarly, not all poor people are vulnerable to, nor equally affected by, disasters (Bankoff, 2003: 12; Bankoff and Hilhorst, 2004: 2). Traditional metrics for approaching studies of poverty have long been rooted in economic epistemologies which utilise empirical measures of income and nutritional consumption as a proxy for level of deprivation (Datt and Ravallion, 1992; Ravallion, 1994; Ravallion and Chen, 2003; Rowntree, 1901). Owing to the conceptual and practical links between poverty and vulnerability, a similar language of economic marginality has also come to dominate mainstream appraisals of vulnerable groups such as women (see Bradshaw et al., 2017; Chant, 2007b). However, while low incomes, job insecurity and a lack of savings or transferable material assets such as land or housing, can, and do, significantly reduce people’s ability to protect themselves from sudden shocks or hazards, the inadequacies of such parameters in capturing the multiple levels of disadvantage inherent to individual experiences of deprivation and vulnerability have been highlighted by many (Appleton, 1996; Baulch, 1996; Kabeer, 1996; Moser, 2009, 2016). Similar charges extend to interrogations of disaster vulnerability, which, in their concern for people’s ‘capacity to avoid or cope with shocks and stresses’, tend to focus on ‘what resources and skills increase people’s resilience’ (Bull-Kamanga et al., 2003: 194),

bypassing 'how one gets from very *widespread conditions* such as "poverty" to very *particular vulnerabilities* that link the political economy to the actual hazards that people face' (Wisner et al., 2004: 11, italics in original).

The contributions of Amartya Sen have been especially pivotal in drawing attention to the multidimensional nature of poverty and vulnerability and in reshaping contemporary definitions and measurement approaches. Sen (1999: 20) contends that poverty should be viewed as a deprivation of basic capabilities and entitlements, and that development initiatives should strive to expand 'the real freedoms that people enjoy' (ibid.: 3). He defines capabilities as 'the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve... reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another... to choose from possible livings' (Sen, 1992: 40). In other words, substantive freedoms and capabilities are mutually construed as individuals' having the choice, agency and ability to utilise assets in a way that enhances their material and non-material wellbeing (ibid.; see also Sen, 1981, 1999). In the context of assessing the dynamics of deprivation and vulnerability within populations frequently exposed to climate-related hazards, Sen's notions of capabilities and entitlements prove particularly useful (Bankoff, 2003: 12; Hewitt, 1997a: 143-51). Extending from Sen's work defining a link between vulnerability and assets, Moser (1998; 2009; see also Moser and Felton, 2007; Stein and Moser, 2014) went on to classify the types of assets and capital which are mobilised by urban poor populations during times of crisis. These can be summarised as physical capital (including housing first and foremost, as well as 'consumer durables' such as radios, mobile phones, televisions, washing machines, motorcycles etc.), financial capital (including livelihood security and physical assets as above that specifically enable income generation), human capital (including health, skills and education), and social capital (encompassing relationships of trust and mutual exchange at the household and community scale) (ibid.; see also Rakodi, 1999).

Recognising the limitations of income-focused poverty appraisals, in 2018 the Philippines officially adopted a multidimensional poverty measure which assesses deprivation through 13 indicators across four dimensions of health and nutrition, education, employment, and access to water, sanitation and secure housing (NEDA, 2018). In 2017, the proportion of Filipinos considered 'multidimensionally deprived' was estimated at 23.9 percent in 2016 and 17.3 percent in 2017, with educational attainment having the highest incidence of deprivation in both years, followed by health and nutrition (ibid.: no page). Seventy percent of the population is also estimated to be working in the informal economy (ILO, 2012: 4), and low wages typical of both formal and informal

employment mean that people commonly engage in several income-generating activities simultaneously to make ends meet.

During times of crisis, the burdens of creatively managing household assets tend to be carried by women, who in addition to reducing their personal food intake (by skipping meals for example) also take on multiple jobs known as '*sidelines*' to generate additional incomes (Chant, 1996: 314; see also Chant and McIlwaine, 1995b, Ch. 3). Lindio-McGovern (2007: 19) similarly notes 'that poor Filipino women, who generally are the ones to attend to the daily needs of the family, are the first to suffer the social psychological impact of the price escalation of food and of other basic daily needs'. These challenges are exacerbated in informal settlements, which, as mentioned in Chapter 1, house an estimated 40 percent of the population. Commonly referred to by the pejorative term 'slum' (Gilbert, 2007, 2009), these residential areas typically have large concentrations of people living in cramped, non-durable housing, often with insecure land tenure and lacking access to safe and affordable water, sanitation and other basic infrastructure (UN-Habitat 2003:12). Similar to Allen et al.'s (2015: 1) notion of 'urban risk traps', informal settlers tend to have smaller asset pools on which to draw owing to mutually reinforcing privations of income, housing, services and infrastructure. Such circumstances have prompted Unterhalter (2009: 16) to conceive of slums as 'spatial poverty traps', especially for women and girls for whom these infrastructural deficiencies impose particular challenges on their health, income-generating potential and reproductive responsibilities (Chant et al., 2017; Chant and McIlwaine, 2016). Informal settlements are also notoriously reputed as spaces of risk, where poverty, crime and disease proliferate (Davis, 2006), and, as I discuss in Chapter 5, have found themselves the targets of risk governance interventions surfacing across the archipelago.

Indeed, health risks, such as those incurred as a result of poor air and water quality, food insecurity, and the spread of infectious and parasitic diseases are exacerbated in densely populated areas lacking adequate drainage, sewage and solid waste disposal facilities, and all the more so during floods or heatwaves (Satterthwaite et al., 2007: 11). Furthermore, 'many provisions for disaster avoidance (e.g. thicker walls), response (access for emergency vehicles), or reducing disaster impacts (readily available open spaces not at risk from falling buildings) are not possible in crowded low-income settlements' (ibid.: 12). Exclusion from public services and isolation from political and legal networks of support further aggravate the vulnerability of the urban poor to chronic and acute stresses (Bartlett et al., 2009; Dodman et al., 2009; Moser and Satterthwaite, 2010; Revi et al., 2014). On this basis, while the vulnerability of informal settlers to disasters is frequently attributed to hazardous environmental exposure associated with the precarity of their settlement

locations, pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and societal divisions that make for a lack of housing and employment alternatives are arguably of greater importance.

While it is possible that new and unforeseen risks will emerge from global warming, the main impacts of climate change are likely to be through an exacerbation of existing hazards and developmental challenges (Bartlett et al., 2009; Bull-Kamanga et al., 2003; Dodman, 2009; Dodman et al., 2009; Kovats, et al., 2014; Ziervogel et al., 2017). For people living in slums, the adverse effects and number of deaths already caused by these everyday or 'extensive risks' are significant (and underestimated), yet despite this, DRRM and CCA narratives, resources, and attention have maintained a preoccupation with 'intensive risks' or major calamitous events (Dodman et al., 2009: 6). Focusing on large-scale calamities overemphasises the significance the 'event' in itself, making slow-onset disasters and everyday risk more invisible, despite their damaging and disruptive consequences in the longer term (ibid.; see also Hewitt, 1997b: 34–6). Concentrating on the short term needs of affected populations, as typified in many disaster relief and risk reduction efforts, tends to focus on the event itself rather than addressing the conditions preceding 'the event' that left certain people more exposed and vulnerable in the first instance (Anderson and Woodrow, 1999: 10, cited in Enarson, 2012: 42). Appraisals of the poverty-vulnerability nexus as it relates to disasters is thus better conceptualised as a 'continuum of risk from everyday to catastrophic disasters' (Satterthwaite et al., 2007: 13). Approaching risk as a continuum directs our attention to the effects of, and interactions between, intensive and extensive risks on communities who must navigate these hazards (Hewitt, 1997b: 156; see also Dodman et al., 2009: 32–3).

The asset and livelihoods-based appraisals of vulnerability common to mainstream considerations of development and disaster risks draw attention to the extensive or chronic pressures affecting low-income groups, and thereby help to illuminate this continuum. However, they are limited in the extent to which they expose the wider structural variables and politics of power that constrain access to assets and produce risk and vulnerability. Instead, emphasis is placed on individual action, responsibility and choice, obfuscating how globalisation, market forces and state policies actively produce and benefit from the vulnerability of certain groups (see Chapter 5). Shifting depictions by development institutions of poor women from 'dependent victims' to 'rational economic agents' offer a case in point, whereby the poor's (and especially poor women's) 'rights' to assistance have become preconditioned on meeting a set of ascribed responsibilities that reinforce gendered power differentials through the exploitation of (largely) female labour (Chant, 2008; Wilson, 2007, 2010: 301–6). As poignantly articulated by Wilson (2010: 301), the

developmental paradox lies in that 'it is often precisely those gendered inequalities which make women more "efficient" neoliberal subjects (such as women's primary responsibility for children, the acute scarcity of time not spent working, and the ubiquitous threat of violence).' The co-option of choice, agency and empowerment by neoliberal capitalism has become even more pronounced with the recent emergence of what Roberts (2014: 2–10) has termed 'transnational business feminism', whereby corporations such as Nike are presented as the 'experts' on gender and development, despite the numerous ways in which women's marginalisation is both produced and exacerbated by global capitalist modes of production (Chant, 2016a; Elson and Pearson, 1981; Hickel, 2014; Mohanty, 2003: 510; Scott, 1986). Taking heed from this example, it is critical that poverty and vulnerability be recognised as relational constructs that comprise social as well as physical determinants which are embedded in wider socio-political structures.

The exclusionary rules through which these structures operate mean that access to assets, opportunities, social and political networks, and the agency to deploy them becomes delineated differentially around intersecting socio-cultural parameters such as age, class, gender, ethnicity and migrant status (Bradshaw, 2013: 8; Cannon, 1994; Enarson et al., 2007; Enarson and Morrow, 1998; Enarson and Scanlon, 1999; McIlwaine, 2002; Wisner and Luce, 1993: 131–3). However as Bradshaw (2013: 10) pertinently remarks, it is not these characteristics in themselves that lead to vulnerability, but the pervasive discrimination and marginalisation faced by certain groups on the basis of these markers, and the ensuing constraints in access to resources and agency that create conditions of vulnerability. As such, Bradshaw argues that instead of focusing on who is most vulnerable (as is common practice in development and DRRM), a more constructive point of inquiry is to question why they are more vulnerable (ibid.). Relatedly, as Allen et al., (2015: 3) contend, considerations of everyday risk:

'acknowledge the daily struggles and experiences of those men, women, boys and girls exposed to urbanisation and urban change under risk conditions. Therefore, when we seek to establish the causes of everyday risks, the limits between human and natural influences become less evident, especially when analysing these along temporal and spatial scales, as well as considering people's daily practices... Additionally, the lack of knowledge and recording of these risks contributes to their invisibility, which in its turn deepens their internalisation within the most vulnerable households and limits the design and implementation of preventive public interventions.'

As I discuss at length below and in subsequent chapters, the implications of this invisibility and internalisation are decidedly gendered. Consequently, I argue that considering the 'everyday' in evaluations of the 'exceptional' holds valuable potential as a practical

methodology for integrating a gendered perspective into analyses of (disaster) risk and urban development. Doing so reveals the nature and distribution of vulnerabilities, labour burdens and coping strategies between groups which are often subsumed into classifications of 'household' or 'community', drawing attention to different embodied geographies of risk and risk governance. In my efforts to identify the power structures and relational dynamics that both produce and reinforce conditions of risk and vulnerability, and to uncover intersectional embodiments of intensive and extensive risks among urban poor informal settlers, insights from feminist urban political ecology have helped me frame my analysis.

## ***2.2 Conceptualising urban risk through feminist political ecology***

### ***2.2.1 The political ecology of disasters in the Philippines***

Political ecology interrogates the socio-political and structural causes and consequences of environmental issues (see Forsyth, 2008: 756–9; Peet and Watts, 1996; Perreault et al., 2015: 4–6) and equally considers 'the ways that environmental change influences socio-economic inequalities, and by extension, political processes' (Bryant, 1992: 24; see also Blaikie, 1985; Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987; Watts, 1983b, 1983a, 2000). This interdisciplinary field is strongly influenced by Marxist theorisations of 'social relations of production, access to and control over resources, and power relations rooted in state and capital' (Watts, 2015: 32). However it moves beyond purely economic appraisals to consider the logics and socio-environmental transformations produced by polarised distributions of power and capital, and related 'processes of techno-economic appropriation of nature' (Leff, 2015: 69). Urban political ecology expands on these theorisations, by specifically examining how cities are implicated in processes of socio-ecological change through the commodification of nature (Katz, 1998; Loftus, 2012; Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003; Swyngedouw and Kaika, 2000). Often evoking metabolism as a metaphor for understanding how flows and circuits of exchange and transformation operate within (and are constitutive of) the urban (ibid.; see also Gandy, 2004; Heynen, et al., 2006; Kaika, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2006), analyses of how social power is performed and reflected in infrastructural networks and exclusions, and how these rights are negotiated and contested, have also been the widely studied (see for example Björkman, 2015; Bullard, 1994; Gandy, 2008; Graham and Marvin, 2001; Loftus, 2006; McFarlane, 2008; Rodgers, 2012; Rodgers and O'Neill, 2012; Swyngedouw, 2004).

Critical disaster scholarship rooted in political ecology points to the origins of disasters in pre-existing social, economic and political structures of inequality that produce

unsafe conditions for particular demographics when met with ‘dynamic pressures... that “translate” the effects of root causes both temporally and spatially into unsafe conditions’ (Wisner et al., 2004: 53).<sup>11</sup> In other words, disasters constitute a progression of vulnerability (ibid.), wherein ‘disaster-prone’ populations are not merely at risk because of their exposure to environmental hazards, but as a result of a marginality that locates them in a state of ‘permanent emergency’ (Bankoff, 2003b: 12). As discussed by Allen et al. (2015: 2), these pressures interact with and reproduce other risks and inequalities, creating ‘risk traps’, which the authors define as ‘vicious cycles by which threats that emerge from everyday risks and small-scale disasters which often go unregistered, produce over time invisible risk conditions in specific localities but with an impact that goes beyond that locality, affecting the urban territory as a whole.’ Examples of such ‘pressures’ in the Philippines include failed land reforms, rapid (albeit late) urbanisation<sup>12</sup>, environmental degradation, trade liberalisation and export-driven economic reforms, and sustained armed conflict, each of which have, and continue to affect geographies of risk and crisis across the archipelago (Bello et al., 2005).

Spanish and subsequent American colonisation dating from 1565 until 1946, systematised extremely unequal patterns of land and resource distribution, concentrating wealth and power into the hands of an elite minority who continue to dominate in economic and political realms of Philippine society today (Ortega, 2018; Sidel, 1999; Winters, 2011). Decisions by exploitative colonial and oligarchic state actors to vehemently promote cash crops over staples, left the archipelago increasingly reliant on food imports and international loans to sustain the demands of its population, further exacerbating conditions of poverty, and vulnerability to natural hazards (Bello et al., 2005; Gaillard et al., 2005: 58–60). Bankoff’s (1999) insightful paper on the politics of natural disasters in the Philippines offers a case in point. Exploring the links between extractive (and at times illegal) natural resource management, disasters and aid, he describes how these crises have been manipulated by those in business and government to serve their economic and political interests (ibid.: 405). Specifically, Bankoff (ibid.: 402) discusses the environmental damage caused by unregulated deforestation, much of which occurs through illegal logging

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<sup>11</sup> In disaster studies, this framework is known as the ‘Disaster Pressure Model’ (Davis, 1987) or ‘Pressure and Release Model’ (Wisner et al., 2004: 51).

<sup>12</sup> Compared to some of its East Asian neighbours including China, Japan and Malaysia, the Philippines remains relatively under urbanised at 46 percent. That said, its urban areas are among the densest in the region, namely owing to the high concentration of people living in the Metro Manila and surrounding areas (World Bank, 2015a: 109), which have grown exponentially in the post-Marcos period (Shatkin, 2007: 13).

activities controlled by military and government officials including congressmen, governors and mayors from across the archipelago (see also Putzel, 1999; Sidel, 1997).

‘By the end of the 1980s, 19 out of the nation's 59 major watersheds were critically denuded, over 70 per cent of the soils in Cebu, Batangas and Marinduque were seriously degraded, and the land area in a further 18 provinces were 50 per cent or more eroded. Heavy siltation, as a result of forest clearance, especially during the monsoon rains, has adverse consequences on agricultural production and endangers nearshore fishing by damaging coral reefs and contributing to the incidence of red tide<sup>13</sup>.’

Deforestation has also been deemed largely responsible for three major disasters in the 1990s, including two droughts (Bankoff, 1999: 402) and the devastating landslide in Ormoc in the province of Leyte, wherein 80 to 90 percent of the city's buildings were destroyed, 5,365 people were killed and another 2,046 remain missing; the majority of whom were informal settlers residing along the flooded river (ibid.: 391). Bankoff continues that the convergence of poverty with recurrent natural hazards in the Philippines has created conditions where natural disasters serve ‘as integral mechanisms that partially regulate the flow of power and wealth within societies’, wherein the rich become richer and more powerful and the poor become more vulnerable and dependent on relief and support from the state (ibid.: 405-6). Such events also serve as valuable profile-raising opportunities for politicians to win public support through displays of swift action and ‘good governance’ in relief and reconstruction efforts, while simultaneously allowing those in power to suppress members of the opposition and advance personal agendas by withholding and pocketing aid or diverting resources (ibid.).

As revealed by Ortega (2018: 10), ongoing programmes of neoliberal restructuring are ‘intimately linked with the sustenance of political and economic power of the country's oligarchs’, with evidence of state-supported development programmes serving as ‘effective modes of accumulation by funnelling much-needed capital into elite business ventures’, including big infrastructure projects as I discuss in Chapter 5. Policies of economic liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, and labour flexibilisation, which have benefited transnational capital, family-based political dynasties and wealthier nations, have had adverse impacts on marginalised groups (see Shatkin, 2007: 19-28, 2016) and especially

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<sup>13</sup> Red tides or phytoplankton blooms are produced through eutrophication; a process whereby environmental conditions (either natural and/or human-induced) foster the prolific reproduction of microalgae, causing the water to turn red, brown or green in colour. These blooms can produce toxins that are harmful both to shellfish and to their human consumers, and in the Philippines, have been responsible for numerous poisonings and deaths in the nation's coastal communities (Bankoff, 2003b: 110).

on women (Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Pratt, 2013; Shatkin, 2016). The conditions produced by these socio-economic and political configurations of power contribute to the gendered riskscapes of urban poor informal settlers, which I argue, are in turn informing gendered participation in local risk management activities (see Chapters 4 and 6). Insights from feminist political ecology are useful in helping to uncover these complex and uneven geographies.

### ***2.2.2 Feminising political ecology analyses of urban risk***

Identifying gender as a critical variable within the above discussed environmental struggles (Rocheleau et al., 1996: 4), feminist political ecology draws attention to the gendered dimensions of political confrontations over access to and control over resources and knowledge, as well as gendered interests and engagement in environmental management and activism (Elmhirst, 2011; Elmhirst and Resurreccion, 2008). My research shows how land tenure and housing insecurity interact with infrastructural and political exclusions to produce distinct gendered and classed urban riskscapes in Metro Cebu. Farhana Sultana's (2009a,b, 2011) and Yaffa Truelove's (2011) appraisals of the gendered political ecologies of water access, use and control in Bangladesh and India, respectively, situate the emotional, material and physical gendered experiences of affected populations at the heart of these environmental struggles.

Sultana's (2009b: 439) extensive research into the embodied effects of arsenic contamination of drinking water in Bangladesh, for example, highlights distinct differences in how men and women experience and negotiate environmental degradation. She identifies gendered perceptions, identities, divisions of labour, and rights as key factors shaping the socio-spatial subjectivities and inequalities that are produced. In a later article, Sultana (2011: 164) examines how emotional embodiments influence 'the outcomes of practices and processes of resource access/use/control' and 'the way critical resources are managed and experienced in everyday survival struggles', persuasively establishing a case for greater consideration of emotional and affective geographies within political ecology analysis. Truelove's (2011: 147–8) appraisal of gendered spatialities of water access in Delhi, and the embodied practices deployed by the urban poor in an effort to navigate their exclusions, showcases how access to resources and infrastructural networks are intrinsically connected to social power, with notable implications for women and girls:

'Bodily experiences, including the wear and tear of water labor, water-related health problems, the physical experience of criminalization for illegal practices and the disciplining required for water-related health issues (including diarrhea and menstruation for example), are intimately tied to the experience of urban space and

rights. Such embodied experiences serve to re-enforce gendered and classed social differences, materially shaping and constraining physical hardships and life opportunities while discursively producing social differences and particular groups of women as excluded from rights and spaces in the city. Thus, social status and the meanings of gender, class and at times criminality become mapped onto the body through the physicality of accessing water and sanitation, as well as the social and emotional consequences and ramifications of the practices of access itself.'

Sapana Doshi's Mumbai-based research (Casolo and Doshi, 2013; Doshi, 2011, 2013a, b), has also inspired my analysis of gendered embodiments, specifically in terms of how gender is mobilised within social movements to contest programmes of urban (re)development that hinge on the displacement of the urban poor. Her work highlights the centrality of women's social reproductive labours to these initiatives, and how engagement in collective action is itself informed by hierarchies and privileges associated with caste and socioeconomics, decentring the homogenisation of women that often features in appraisals of gendered participation (Doshi, 2013a). More broadly, Doshi's work interrogates the 'connections between embodied precarity... social reproduction... and socio-spatial inequalities', and calls for greater consideration of 'how affective intensities work through and shape infrastructures and socio-natural flows' (Doshi, 2017: 126-7).

In disaster studies, engagement with the emotional/affective realm has been most apparent in appraisals of risk perception. According to Gaillard (2008: 315), '[r]isk perception is different from the simple knowledge that a hazard exists in the environment and instead refers to the possibility people give that a hazard will affect them.' On this basis, he concludes that efforts to understand and address risks to natural hazards must acknowledge the ways in which non-hazard factors such as culture and wider structural and economic constraints shape people's perspectives and responses to risk. In turn, a substantial body of research on gendered perceptions of environmental risk and disaster in Global North and South countries has identified heightened levels of awareness and caution among women than men (Bateman and Edwards, 2002; Enarson, 2009; Eriksen et al., 2010; Flynn et al., 1994; Fothergill, 1998; Haynes et al., 2010; Satterfield et al., 2004; Tyler and Fairbrother, 2013). Satterfield et al. (2004: 115) assert that demographic differences in risk perception are 'driven not simply by the social advantages or disadvantages embodied in race or gender, but by the subjective experience of vulnerability and by socio-political evaluations pertaining to environmental injustice.' Such findings speak to the gendered embodiments of risk highlighted by Truelove (2011), and reinforce the need to contextualise appraisals of risk within an awareness of the existing socio-political structures that shape people's identities and interactions with one another and their environment. These nuances are integral to designing effective DRRM interventions, and to

ensuring that the objectives and outcomes of DRRM programmes are in line with those of intended beneficiaries (rather than presumed to be so) (Bankoff et al., 2015: 7).

By locating social reproduction at the centre of my analysis of urban (disaster) risk governance, including the community-based efforts that have emerged within (and in response to) unequal geographies of risk, insecurity and dispossession, my research also contributes to ongoing efforts to engender urban theorisations (Beebeejaun, 2017; Bondi, 1998, 1999; Bondi and Rose, 2003; Casolo and Doshi, 2013; Chant and McIlwaine, 2016; Doshi, 2011, 2013b, 2017; Fenster, 2005; Katz, 2001b, 2001a; Peake, 2016; Peake and Rieker, 2013). As Peake and Bondi (1988: 30) assert ‘production and reproduction are not discrete processes... but are closely enmeshed’ and fundamental to studies of urban politics. ‘Returning the term urban to its theoretical basis in the reproduction of labour power broadens the scope of urban politics and allows a fuller understanding of the importance of gender divisions’ (ibid.: 33), creating an entry point for alternative articulations of modern urbanism centred around matters of distribution, rights and justice (Peake and Rieker, 2013: 9). Furthermore, as Chant and McIlwaine (2016: 3) argue, ‘cities are overwhelmingly designed *by* men and *for* men... [rendering] women... less mobile than men in urban environments... more vulnerable to violence and... [all the more] disadvantaged by gender roles and relations’ (italics in original). The same can be said of DRRM and CCA interventions in Metro Cebu, which, as I discuss in Chapter 5, are operating as an extension of neoliberal developmentalism dominated by techno-scientific and notably masculinised priorities (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014; Denton, 2002; Israel and Sachs, 2013; MacGregor, 2009; Terry, 2009) despite the significant impacts of these issues on women’s lives (Alber, 2011; Bradshaw and Fordham, 2013).

### ***2.2.3 Intersections between gender, development and disasters***

Theoretical considerations of gender in political ecology and disaster scholarship have grown from (and to some extent mirrored) evolving debates within the well-established field of GAD. As a brief summary of this trajectory, attention to gender, or more specifically, to women’s development needs started to emerge in the 1970s, marked by the United Nation’s International Decade for Women (1975-85). Subsequent policies developed under what became known as the Women in Development (WID) approach framed women as a homogenous group of victims to male oppression, sharing uniform needs and interests that development institutions had failed to address (Benería, 2012; Moser, 1993). Subsequent feminist critiques highlighted numerous oversights and limitations of WID, including the assumption that women would automatically ‘benefit from being “slotted in” to existing

(male-biased) development structures' (Chant and McIlwaine, 2009: 223; see also Parpart, 1995: 227), not to mention WID's exclusion of men and disregard for the power relations underpinning gendered disadvantage.

In response to these critiques, GAD emerged as an alternative approach that sought to address women's 'strategic gender interests' as well their 'practical needs' (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014: 4; Chant and Gutmann, 2000). According to Molyneux (1985: 232-3)<sup>14</sup>, 'strategic gender interests' are those:

'derived... from the analysis of women's subordination... and the strategic objectives to overcome women's subordination, such as the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare, the removal of institutionalised forms of discrimination, the attainment of political equality, the establishment of freedom of choice over childbearing and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women.'

'Practical gendered interests' (or as Moser (1989) terms them 'practical gendered needs'), conversely, 'arise from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labour..., are usually a response to an immediate perceived need, and do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality' formulated through external interventions (Molyneux, 1985: 232-3). These include 'basic needs such as food, shelter and water' and access to income generating opportunities (Moser, 1989: 1803). This critical distinction between practical needs and strategic interests remains at the heart of contemporary feminist appraisals of development policies and programmes whose stated aim is to 'empower' women, and, as I showcase throughout my thesis, are equally relevant in efforts to mainstream gender into DRRM and urban development.

The related genealogy of feminist political ecology debates has been documented inter alia by Bradshaw and Linneker (2014) and Elmhirst and Resurreccion (2008). Around the same time that GAD was embraced, at least in principle, in preference to WID in the 1980s, critiques of early 'ecofeminist' portrayals of women as 'natural' environmental stewards encompassed under the women, environment and development (WED) umbrella, encouraged more nuanced interrogations of gender-environment relations as embedded within socio-political structures and power dynamics (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014; Elmhirst and Resurreccion, 2008). 'Ecofeminist' assertions connected with the WED tradition were also criticised for perpetuating biologically deterministic contentions that

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<sup>14</sup> These ideas were later developed by Moser (1989).

painted women as both 'chief victims and caretakers' of the environment (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014: 4, citing Resurreccion, 2013). This discourse shares similarities with the instrumentalist 'smart economics' doctrine heralded by the World Bank (2006, 2011) some 20 years later, that construes women as 'untapped resources' and posits female empowerment achieved by increasing female labour force participation, as the most effective means of eliminating global poverty (Chant, 2016; Chant and Sweetman, 2012).

In terms of gender and disasters, vulnerability has arguably been the central analytic informing both theoretical debates and applied gender mainstreaming efforts. Pioneers of this field sought to raise awareness of women's increased vulnerability during and after major catastrophic events; a welcome and necessary contribution to a discipline that was (and arguably remains) more preoccupied with hazards than with the lived experiences of these events and the conditions underpinning vulnerability to them (Enarson and Fordham, 2001; Enarson, 1998, 2000; Enarson and Morrow, 1998; Fordham, 1999; Fordham and Ketteridge, 1998; Morrow and Enarson, 1996). This literature (as well as emerging considerations of gender and climate change) identifies gender norms and unequal power relations which constrain women agency and access to, and control over assets, as among the main factors contributing to feminised vulnerability to climate-related risks and disasters (see also Alber, 2011; Bartlett et al., 2009; Cannon, 1994; Hewitt, 1997a; Neumayer and Plümper, 2007; Wisner et al., 2004; Wisner and Luce, 1993).

According to Cannon (1994: 14), social and spatial inequalities in exposure to risks from environmental hazards are primarily a function of the power hierarchies operating within a given society that put some groups more at risk than others. Owing to pervasive gender norms of power and privilege that position men at the top of the pyramid (Bradshaw and Fordham, 2013; Enarson and Morrow, 1998b), women and girls are considered especially vulnerable to climate-related hazards and disasters (Ariyabandu and Fonseka, 2009; Enarson and Morrow, 1998b; Ganapati, 2012, 2013; OCHA, 2012; Oxfam, 2005, 2012, 2013; Turnbull et al., 2013: 21–3; UNISDR, 2005; Wisner et al., 2004). Their identification as such, has been primarily attributed to assumed differentials in income and other material assets, as well as inequalities pertaining, *inter alia*, to health, education, access to information, political voice and physical strength (Bradshaw, 2013; Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014: 12–3; Wisner et al., 2004). Not discounting the obvious truths inherent to this portrayal, labels of feminised vulnerability have homogenised and confined women and girls into categories of victims (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Cupples, 2007; Fordham, 1999), presenting women's vulnerability as a 'natural' state rather than a socially produced outcome of discrimination and inequalities. It also overlooks the multiple identities that

women (and men) embody outside that of victimhood (and protector/provider), not to mention the critical and often unacknowledged roles that women have in disaster preparedness, response and recovery (see for example Bradshaw, 2001, 2002, 2013; Bradshaw and Fordham, 2013; Enarson, 2006, 2013; Mishra, 2009).

A wealth of critical and insightful literature on gender, development and environmental issues has since been produced, although the translation of these learnings to DRRM scholarship and practice has been limited owing to an ongoing conceptual and operational rift between these disciplines (Bradshaw, 2015; Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014; Enarson, 2013). Coming from a background in GAD myself, my engagement with the bulk of gender and disaster scholarship has left me both surprised and routinely frustrated at the siloed focus in both development and disaster studies, despite their presumably shared interests and aims (on this point, see Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014; Fordham, 2003). This can perhaps partly explain why mainstream DRRM practice remains largely fixated around biologically deterministic stereotypes that portray men as leaders, protectors and providers, and women as vulnerable and economically dependent mothers and carers. In addition to reinforcing and reproducing the binary, essentialist thinking it is supposed to redress, DRRM policies informed by this line of thought ignore the multiple subjectivities inherent to personal experiences of insecurity, deprivation and calamity. It is also worth noting that the underlying power hierarchies that contribute to vulnerability also shape the dynamics and outcomes of participatory development (Cornwall, 2004b; Cornwall and White, 2000), which, as I discuss below, is actively promoted in Philippine DRRM.

## ***2.3 Gender, development and DRRM in the Philippines***

### ***2.3.1 Paradoxes of gender empowerment***

The Philippines is often presented as a role model in disaster management and gender mainstreaming, not only in relation to its Southeast Asian neighbours, but globally. Across the archipelago, women are the main participants in CBDRRM initiatives. Their notable visibility is at least partially attributable to the relative advancement of gender awareness and mainstreaming efforts in the Philippines compared with other disaster-affected countries (IFRCRCS, 2009; Abarquez and Parreño, 2013: 49). The Philippines carries the reputation for being the most gender equitable country in the Asia and Pacific region and the seventh most gender equitable nation worldwide according to the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), having maintained its position in top ten list since the measure began in 2006. Outranking New Zealand, Germany and the UK among many other high income countries,

areas of celebrated 'female advantage' in this lower-middle income nation include educational attainment, female representation among professional and technical workers, and gendered life expectancy (WEF, 2016), though the extent to which the latter actually constitutes an 'achievement' is questionable given women's biological advantage in the latter.

Female labour force participation is among the highest in the Southeast Asian region at 46.3 percent (77.8 percent for men) (PCW, 2017: 19), with women also constituting 51 percent of overseas Filipino workers in 2015 (*ibid.*: 9). Women also make up 64 percent of those employed in export manufacturing zones (Ang et al., 2009: xiii), 30 percent of national parliament<sup>15</sup> (World Bank, 2018: no page) and have lower (and decreasing) unemployment rates than men (4.3 percent for women compared to 4.9 percent for men) (PCW, 2017: 6). These trends extend to the realm of politics as evidenced by the election into office of two female presidents, two female vice presidents and numerous female senators. This said, gender gaps in employment and political empowerment remain marked, with traditional gender stereotypes and overt as well as covert practices of discrimination serving to stifle women's entry into the labour market while simultaneously constraining their ability to secure decent work (Chant, 2014; Chant and McIlwaine, 1995b).

The Philippine economy reflects a classic case of the feminisation of labour where rising levels of female labour force participation have emerged alongside a shift towards sectors traditionally associated with women that are themselves typified by informal employment arrangements, low salaries and poor working conditions (Chant, 2014). Women's presence in the labour market grew exponentially in the 1980s, amidst the expansion of its garments, electronics, export manufacturing and service industries prompted by the financial crisis and subsequent period of imposed neoliberal economic reform (Chant and McIlwaine, 1995a, b). To this day, women continue to make up a large proportion of those employed in these sectors (Albert and Vizmanos, 2017) and tend to occupy lower status, less technical roles than men. Even accounting for differences in human capital, they are also paid between 40-50 percent less than their male counterparts in the same jobs. These industries have also been among those most affected by the global financial crisis in 2007-08, (Gaerlan et al., 2010; Lindio-McGovern, 2007), pushing women

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<sup>15</sup> Though this proportion is by no means high, the number of women elected into local and national government in the Philippines is considerably higher than neighbouring regions and comparative to many developed countries.

into increasingly precarious working arrangements of home-based assembly and sub-contracting.

Consequently, many women have resorted to working abroad, with overseas foreign workers (OFWs) collectively contributing 180.3 billion pesos in remittances (equivalent to USD 3.53 billion or roughly 10 per cent of GDP) in 2015 (PSA, 2016a). Spending much of their working lives away from their children and families at great personal sacrifice, these women are celebrated as the country's '*bagong bayani*' or 'new heroes', with the month of December dedicated to OFWs as a mark of national appreciation (Gavilan, 2016). With little regard for the personal and familial costs incurred (Pratt, 2013), (female) labour export is actively promoted by the Philippine government under a guise of being 'mutually empowering'. This is a label Wozniak (2015: 102) asserts is false, owing to 'the cycle of human rights violations and economic stagnation' embroiled in these processes. The paradoxes inherent to female labour force participation are also discussed by Parreñas (2008: 187) who contends that with the increasing reliance of the Philippine economy on female labour:

'in export manufacturing and migrant domestic work... the nation promotes the movement of women away from the private sphere... Yet the economy keeps women inside the home by promoting the restriction of their employment to economically devalued jobs that are considered mere extensions of their work in the private domain. Filipino women therefore continue to face dim prospects for mobility, for they still suffer from a severe wage gap, face a sex-segregated labour market, and remain without much opportunity for promotion.'

These contradictory identities ascribed to women are, she argues, key features of the 'modernisation-building process', and strategic to state interests in that they justify 'the persistence of the wage gap and sex segregation in the local labour market' and secure the low wages of women, maintaining 'the attractiveness of the Philippine labour force to foreign companies' (Parreñas, 2003: 39).

Evidence of the continuing legacy of the feminisation of labour in the Philippines is further apparent in the 2016 Gender Statistics on Labour and Employment Report (PSA and ICF International, 2014), which shows higher rates of male underemployment and marginally longer hours worked by women than men in paid employment. Gendered discrepancies in economic participation, opportunity and income are even more pronounced among low-income groups, with women in this demographic typically less educated and thus consigned to working in the informal economy where salaries are lower and less reliable, and regulatory avenues for challenging discrimination largely absent. Despite women assuming a growing responsibility for income generation in both formal

and informal sectors (Chant and McIlwaine, 1995a, b), men continue to be viewed as the primary income earners in spite of the fact that their low wages and growing levels of unemployment increasingly leave households reliant on female earnings (see Chant, 2007, Ch. 5). Time poverty differentials are also discernibly greater among the poor, where the cumulative effects of income and infrastructure inadequacies create a 'reproductive tax burden' (Palmer, 1992) requiring women to invest more time in household chores and unpaid carework (Chant, 2007a, 2013, 2014; Chant and McIlwaine, 2016; Tacoli, 2012). Women are also less likely to own property than men (44.6 percent homeowners) and in some regions have less access to credit than their male counterparts (Abarquez and Parreño, 2013: 36).

While the Philippines has made commendable efforts to establish a legal and institutional framework sensitive to women's interests, including the ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1981, the 2004 Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act (VAWC), and the more recent signing of the 2009 Magna Carta for Women<sup>16</sup>, in the context of reproductive rights, the situation remains wanting. Contraception has only recently featured in public health policy, and both abortion and divorce remain illegal. Maternal mortality levels are also inordinately high at 114 deaths per 100,000 births compared with the average maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 59 deaths per 100,000 in the East Asia and Pacific region (World Bank, 2015: no page) and the global MMR target of no more than 52 deaths. Furthermore, according to the 2013 Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey (PSA and ICF International, 2014: 13), one in five women reported experiencing physical violence since the age of 15, with later research also finding that ten per cent of female respondents had experienced spousal physical or sexual violence in the twelve month period preceding the survey (World Bank, 2014: 40). Failures to amend other pieces of legislation, including the Family Code of 1988 which stipulates the subordinate status of women in relation to conjugal property disagreements and cases of adultery, have also served to undermine judicial efforts in advancing gender equality (Parreñas, 2003).

By neglecting to incorporate critically important issues of bodily integrity, agency, independence and choice (see Eerdewijk et al., 2017) into their framework, gender equality

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<sup>16</sup> The Magna Carta for Women (Republic Act 9710) is a comprehensive piece of human rights legislation pertaining to women's rights and discrimination against women and girls in the Philippines.

and empowerment measures such as the GGGI present a misleading picture of gendered disadvantage and are especially unrepresentative of the differing realities across socio-economic groups, in a country where more than one-fifth of the population is estimated to be living in poverty (PSA, 2016b). Given the unrelenting dependence of the national economy and individual households on the feminisation of labour in its many facets, in a context of already feminised (and possibly feminising) CBDRRM initiatives, the extent to which women's participation in these multiple spheres of activity is prompting a redistribution of labour within the household becomes paramount to considerations of empowerment. An awareness for how female agency and initiative is construed by the women themselves, as well as by the wider community, is also integral to this analysis.

### ***2.3.2 Gender mainstreaming in DRRM***

Despite the visible and active presence of women in Philippine CBDRRM, state level discourse continues to frame them first and foremost as victims. For example, in the Philippine DRRM Act of 2010, women are identified as 'vulnerable and marginalised groups' alongside the elderly, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities (Congress of the Philippines, 2010: 12). Rather worryingly, women's access to gender specific support and assistance during and post-disasters appears to be predicated around motherhood, as depicted in the statement encouraging local governments 'to create a special place where internally-displaced mothers can find help with breastfeeding, feed and care for their babies and give support to each other' (ibid.: 24). While such provisions for nursing mothers are important and welcome, the wider effects of unequal care burdens, gendered divisions of labour, violence and insecurity on women's (and men's) health and wellbeing during and post-disaster appear to be subsumed by this narrow optic.

Surprisingly, given the notability of the Philippines for mainstreaming gender into DRRM, bar the generic affirmations about including marginalised groups and strengthening their DRRM capacities, this is also the only area where gender (or more accurately female) specific considerations are noted explicitly. Similarly, in the Climate Change Act of 2009, the only appearance of gender in any guise, is in the call for special attention to 'be given to ensure equal and equitable protection of the poor, women, children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors' (Climate Change Commission, 2010: 5). Statements of recognition that disasters and climate change have differentiated impacts on women and men feature across both documents, as does the need for creating inclusive 'participative' frameworks. However there is no mention of the vital role women play in CBDRRM, nor any

acknowledgement of their frequent exclusion (especially of poor women) in post-disaster planning and decision-making processes.

One possible and welcome exception to this pattern is arguably the Magna Carta of Women, published a year before the DRRM Act of 2010, which identifies the vulnerability of women and girls to disasters as a 'rights-based' issue, highlighting gender-based violence, reproductive, mental, and physical health, access to information and livelihood support as critical areas affecting women during and post-disaster. It also offers more nuanced guidance for mainstreaming gender into DRRM practice, including the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and reproductive health indicators in planning humanitarian responses, proactively adopting measures to prevent sexual violence in evacuation centres, and ensuring the active involvement of women in camp committees and decision-making processes (PCW, 2010: 53–4). Given the quality of this document, it is unfortunate but perhaps telling, that the language and best practice offered has not transferred to other pieces of legislation, nor was any reference made to the Magna Carta.

The relative invisibility of gender issues, and reproduction of binary gender stereotypes within disaster and climate change discourses and policies is by no means unique to the Philippines, but rather characteristic of these sectors internationally (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014). This is perhaps unsurprising given the extent to which DRRM and climate change issues are dominated by stereotypically masculine concerns with science and securitisation (Denton, 2002; MacGregor, 2009: 132; Terry, 2009). In the Philippine context, the fact that DRRM falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of National Defence offers a case in point. Governance of DRRM by this traditionally male-dominated unit may also contribute to the ongoing tendencies noted by Balgos (2013: 292) of prioritising relief and response over mitigation and prevention. As articulated by Slovic (1999: 689) more generally, defining risk is an exercise in power:

'[w]hoever controls the definition of risk controls the rational solution to the problem at hand. If risk is defined one way, then one option will rise to the top as the most cost-effective or the safest or the best. If it is defined another way, perhaps incorporating qualitative characteristics and other contextual factors, one will likely get a different ordering of action solutions.'

In the Philippines, as elsewhere, the mainstreaming of gender into both DRRM and development remains largely premised around biologically deterministic stereotypes (Fordham and Ketteridge, 1998). This framing ignores the multiple subjectivities inherent to personal experiences of insecurity, deprivation and calamity, and fails to confront issues of power and powerlessness underpinning vulnerability. These same structures and

hierarchies have equally significant implications for the dynamics and outcomes of 'participatory' processes (Cornwall, 2003, 2004b; Cornwall and White, 2000).

## ***2.4 Problematising participation, empowerment, and resilience***

### ***2.4.1 Potentials and pitfalls of 'bottom-up' participation***

Participation has become an orthodoxy and assumed marker of good practice within the development sector and beyond. Framed as representing an alternative to externally imposed and expert-oriented development prescriptions which treat the poor as passive recipients, 'bottom-up' participatory approaches view those on the margins as valuable actors and repositories of knowledge, whose active contribution can greatly improve the relevance, efficiency and sustainability of development projects (Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 5). Critical to the systematic endorsement of this paradigm shift from 'top-down' to 'bottom-up' are claims of 'empowerment' (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001: 171; Hickey and Mohan, 2005; Holland et al., 2015); a presumed outcome secured through the inclusion and participation of 'beneficiaries'. These purported empowering benefits extend to the realm of disaster management, where citizen participation and community engagement are increasingly promoted as crucial to hazard mitigation, vulnerability reduction and 'resilience-building' (Benson et al., 2001; Fernandez et al., 2012; Luna, 2001; Maskrey, 1989, 2011).

This paradigm shift owes much to the work of Robert Chambers on Participatory Rural Appraisal;<sup>17</sup> an approach that gained considerable currency in national and international development agencies from the 1980s onwards, which aims to champion local knowledge and empower 'those who are poor, weak and vulnerable' (Chambers, 1994a: 9) by incorporating their ideas and opinions into the design, implementation and management of development programmes (Edwards and Hulme, 1992). One of the earliest advocates of CBDRRM, Maskrey (1989: 35) argues that 'reducing vulnerability must involve empowering people, if it is to be truly effective'; a process that he contends 'involves shifting the communities' position from passive 'objects' to active 'subjects' who are enabled to voice their needs, negotiate resources and support from the state and civil society and direct these partnerships to facilitate local risk management (ibid.: 44). Chambers (1994: 1) echoes this perspective, identifying 'a transfer of power from "uppers" - people, institutions and disciplines which have been dominant, to "lowers" - people, institutions and disciplines which have been subordinate', as integral to participatory processes. In the absence of this

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<sup>17</sup> See for example Chambers (1986; 1994b, 2007) and Chambers and Blackburn (1996).

reversal of power relations, he contends that labels of participation are nothing more than 'cosmetic' or 'co-opting' efforts to secure public buy-in for low-cost projects delivered using local labour and resources with minimum outside assistance.

However in reality, the power relations and binary distinctions between 'uppers' and 'lowers' or state and community are often more blurred and complex than these assertions would imply, and as Cornwall (2002) has persuasively argued, participation is neither neutral nor morally and inherently 'good' or 'efficient' in serving the needs of those 'participating'. Rather, these spaces are fraught with contestation and power dynamics that operate within and across scales, and must also be understood and evaluated in relation to their 'generative past(s)' (ibid.: 4 citing Lefebvre, 1991: 110), including the context and means through which they were created (Gaventa, 2002: 7). Following this argument, Cornwall (2004a) distinguishes between 'invited spaces' that are created or legitimised within formal, state-sanctioned frameworks, and 'popular' or to use Mirafteb's (2004: 1) term, 'invented' spaces which are produced through initiative and collective action 'from below' and which directly challenge 'the status quo in the hope of larger societal change and resistance to the dominant power relations'.

Notwithstanding the obvious advantages of community engagement over imposed, top-down outside interventions, inclusion in any arena of participation is never an assured reality but a continuous process of negotiating power relations and rights to representation and voice (Cornwall, 2004a). Additionally, in the context of homeowner associations in the Philippines, the active role of NGOs and state agencies in community organising processes complicates whether these arrangements reflect 'popular spaces' that have developed organically at people's own instigation, or are 'invited spaces' being depicted as 'grassroots' initiatives (ibid.: 2).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, despite the prominence of DRRM and CCA in local and national urban agendas, the capacity of the Philippine state to meet the needs of those most vulnerable has proven limited, leaving many of the day-to-day responsibilities of preparing for, responding to, and managing risks to individual households and communities. This trend has become even more pronounced and formalised in the shift towards CBDRRM that has recently come to the forefront of the government's DRRM and 'resilience-building' agenda (Bankoff and Hilhorst, 2009: 5). As such, I would argue that neither Chambers nor Maskrey's take on participatory empowerment go far enough, as they neglect to extend their

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<sup>18</sup> For a historical overview of community organising and community-based organisations in the Philippines, see Shatkin (2007).

focus beyond the sphere of the community politics, towards that of the household, and to consider how costs of participation may be experienced at this scale.

#### ***2.4.2 The gendered costs of 'building back better'***

Local embeddedness and effective partnerships across different scales of governance are seen as critical attributes of resilience-building; a newer addition to the growing list of contemporary buzzwords pervading the fields of development and disaster management. Conceptualised as both an outcome and a process (Manyena, 2006: 436–9 citing Kaplan, 1999), the term resilience broadly pertains to the capacity of a system or community to resist, absorb, and recover from exposure to shocks or hazards (Barrett and Conostas, 2014; Folke et al., 2002; Walker et al., 2004). Similar in some ways to the notion of sustainability, resilience's recent surge in popularity owes much to its stated holistic and multidisciplinary nature, which seems of clear benefit to analyses of complex multi-scalar issues (Barrett and Conostas, 2014: 14625; Welsh, 2014). However a consensus on what resilience means in practice for different stakeholders, how it is best achieved, and who is, and should be, responsible for it has yet to be reached. In line with this ambiguity, the concept has run up against critiques for neglecting to consider hierarchies of power and inequality as they affect different groups and individuals likely to be implicated in these processes (Harvey, 1996; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2012; Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003; Todd, 2001; Ziervogel et al., 2017). Many scholars have also highlighted its marked parallels with neoliberal logics of governmentality, where rationalities of self-moderation and individual responsabilisation enable states to govern their subjects from afar (Daouk, 2014; Joseph, 2013; Walker and Cooper, 2011; Welsh, 2014; Zebrowsky, 2013).

Emphasising the parallels between governmentality and disaster resilience, Zebrowsky (2013: 170) describes resilient populations as flowing from 'obscure ontopolitical processes' contingent on particular practices and epistemologies of (neo)liberal governance. In a succinct articulation of the conceptual dynamics inherent to resilience-building projects, Welsh (2014: 20) agrees that these 'approaches operate on the normative assumption that communities can and should self-organise to deal with uncertainty, that uncertainty is a given not something with a political dimension, and the role of government is limited to enabling, shaping and supporting, but specifically not to direct or to fund those processes.' He goes on to describe the distinctive remodelling of subject behaviour that emerges as a consequence of this ontology, citing Reid (2012: 69) who maintains that "[r]esilient" peoples do not look to states to secure their wellbeing

because they have been disciplined into believing in the necessity to secure it for themselves.’

Whatever the case, the prominence of the concept across institutional narratives of DRRM, CCA and development policy shows that its international appeal is gaining traction (Béné et al., 2012). Perhaps most noteworthy is its double featuring in Agenda 2030’s Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>19</sup> which is likely attributable in part to the numerous urban resilience initiatives that are surfacing around the globe.<sup>20</sup> However when evaluated from a gendered perspective, as Bradshaw (2015) critically argues in her review of post-2015 development and disaster agendas, the extent to which this seemingly holistic terminology has prompted a genuine departure from traditional thinking and priorities remains questionable. Appraising the ways in which gender considerations of sexual and reproductive rights have been incorporated (or not) into the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Bradshaw argues that the SDGs are simultaneously wanting and ‘over-ambitious to the point of being mere rhetoric’ (ibid.: 64). In the case of the international disaster risk reduction framework, gender remains largely absent, highlighting the ongoing disconnect between gender, development and disaster agendas (ibid.). In this sense, rather than serving as novel interdisciplinary approaches to managing complex socio-political issues, ‘resilience-building’ and ‘sustainable development’ frameworks may more accurately reflect a repackaging of the same old siloed development prescriptions, which, as Bradshaw puts it, is ‘a marriage of convenience’ (ibid.: 65). Central to debates on resilience are questions pertaining to the principles and practices of ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’, sharing marked parallels with the issues raised in the context of development programming. However, the precise meaning and manner of ‘doing’ empowerment remains contested among scholars and practitioners alike. Furthermore, akin to its partner concept ‘participation’, its inherently political nature means that the term is frequently deployed by different actors to serve agendas and interests that may actually reinforce rather than address the power differentials underpinning poverty and vulnerability (Cornwall, 2003; Dill, 2009; Mercer, 2002; Mosse, 1994; Rigon, 2014).

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<sup>19</sup> Goal 9: ‘Build *resilient* infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation’, and Goal 11: ‘Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, *resilient* and sustainable’.

<sup>20</sup> See <http://accrn.net/> as well as <http://www.100resilientcities.org> and <http://resilient-cities.iclei.org> for examples.

Contemporary political discourses depicting resilience-building strategies as objective, 'natural' exercises of self-organising efficiency in the face of crisis (Zebrowski, 2013: 160) bypass the effect of distributive politics and risk subjectivities on a population's response and capacity to adapt (Welsh, 2014). In fact, Walker and Cooper (2011: 144) assert that the extent to which resilience has been successful in 'colonising multiple arenas of governance is due to its intuitive ideological fit with a neoliberal philosophy'; a narrative wherein crises are naturalised (Evans, 2011: 224) and hegemonic beliefs aligned with global capitalism are reinforced (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2012: 266). Contending that both disasters and adaptive capacities are produced by the structures and currents of global capitalism, MacKinnon and Derickson (2012: 254–5) caution against blindly endorsing a language that conceals these forces, privileges existing socio-spatial relations and misdirects responsibility onto local actors under the auspices of community action.

These cautions echo charges waged by Filipino feminist scholars in relation to the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Programme (Bridging Programme for the Filipino Family - 4Ps); a national anti-poverty initiative introduced in 2007, which offers conditional cash transfers (CCTs) to poor families in return for compliance with specific requirements pertaining to the health and schooling of their children (see Laguilles, 2012). Both in the Philippines and elsewhere, CCT programmes are sold as contributing to the advancement of women's rights and empowerment (ibid.; see also Bradshaw, 2008; Chant, 2016; Molyneux, 2006). However, as many have argued, gendered divisions in productive and reproductive labour typically mean that it is the mothers who invariably become responsible for meeting the imposed conditions, and who subsequently shoulder the blame and shame should the grant be withheld (Bradshaw, 2008; Chant, 2016; Molyneux, 2006).<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, in addition to facilitating a 'displacement of public responsibilities to the private arena' (Bradshaw, 2008: 191), Bradshaw (ibid.: 201) pertinently notes how within these schemes, 'the personal deprivation suffered by women through their socially constructed altruism is not problematised but explicitly reinforced as the social norm.'

Women play a critical role in post-disaster recovery and resilience-building processes. However all too often, their contributions are undervalued entirely or framed simply as helping men (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014: 17; Enarson, 2006; Enarson and

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<sup>21</sup> Similar dynamics have been noted in relation to 'feminisation of debt' (Mayoux, 2002 cited in Chant, 2016: 9) that has been propagated through the steadfast endorsement of microfinance projects, where (typically female) loan recipients who fail to repay their debts are shunned by their families and communities, resulting in marital abandonment, social exclusion and at times even suicide (see also Federici, 2014: 237–8).

Morrow, 1998). In countries and communities where state support before, during and post-disaster is minimal owing to a lack of resources, willingness or both, women are visibly driving emergency preparedness, housing and community development initiatives at the grassroots in conjunction with, or as part of, their existing reproductive responsibilities (Ajibade et al., 2013; Bradshaw and Fordham, 2013; David and Enarson, 2012; Fordham et al., 2007; Fordham and Gupta, 2010). A study by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (IFRCRCS, 2009: 5–6) on CBDRRM in the Philippines found that women make ‘up 30 to 60 per cent of BDAT (‘Barangay<sup>22</sup> Disaster Action Teams’) and over 90 percent of Barangay Health Workers’. Abarquez and Parreño’s (2013: 49) detailed appraisal of gender mainstreaming within Philippine DRRM policies and practices also identifies women as the primary participants in community-based disaster preparedness. However, despite the skills and knowledge women have acquired through their gender roles that could be helpful in preventing, responding and adapting to natural hazards, they remain conspicuously underrepresented in higher level institutional structures of decision-making, strategic planning, budgeting and resource allocation for DRRM and CCA interventions in the archipelago (ibid.; Kasidi et al., 2009; Raralio and Ebo, 2009).

While the global impetus for ‘engendering’ disasters and climate change policy has been slow on the take-up (Alber, 2011; Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014), it appears to be growing, impelled perhaps by proclamations about women’s ‘untapped potential’ as agents for development being vehemently promoted by influential international bodies such as the UN and the World Bank (UN Women, 2011; World Bank, 2011). Chant (2008) has been especially critical of such efficiency driven, instrumentalist approaches to development and particularly of the flourishing ‘feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation’ that has been reinforced by ‘smart economics’ rhetoric that targets women as key actors in the fight against poverty (see also Chant, 2012; Chant and Sweetman, 2012; Roberts and Soederberg, 2012). Mindful of the wealth of evidence from around the world which suggests that women are the primary buffers for their households and communities during times of crisis (Brickell and Chant, 2010; Chant, 2008; David and Enarson, 2012; Elson, 1991, 1995; Wilson, 2007, 2010: 301), Bradshaw (2013: 155) warns of an emerging ‘feminisation of disaster response’, and appeals for more careful consideration of the nature of gendered

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<sup>22</sup> Barangay is the Filipino term for village, district or ward. Barangays are the smallest formal administrative division in local government and may be further subdivided into smaller units of governance called *puroks*, zones, or *sitios*.

participation, and specifically, the terms of female inclusion in DRRM and post-disaster reconstruction efforts.

Numerous evaluations of participatory development projects around the world have exposed how labels of participation can mask entrenched power dynamics and reproduce existing patterns of exclusion and inequality (Chhotray, 2004; Cornwall, 2004b; Mosse, 1994, 2001). Additionally, a language of participation may serve to legitimise a lack or withdrawal of state support and accountability, concealing the costs of inclusion for different groups under claims of empowerment (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2014: 147; see also Bradshaw, 2013). These cautions would seem especially relevant to the Philippines, where women are visibly driving grassroots DRRM interventions, especially in relation to health, housing and psychosocial recovery in low-income communities and informal settlements<sup>23</sup> (Heljmans and Victoria, 2001). However as MacKinnon and Derickson (2012: 257) concede '[t]he recent upsurge of interest in community resilience is not only a product of the "top-down" strategies of government, but also of the "bottom-up" activities of a wide variety of community groups and environmental campaigns' who are equally vested in creating their own versions of a more resilient future (ibid.: 257). This suggests that while there may be features of governmentality and smart economies prevalent within resilience-building projects, these are by no means all-encompassing forces. In the Philippines, corruption and patronage politics traditionally associated with the state (McCoy, 1994; Sidel, 1997, 1999) have opened up further questions about the intentions behind emerging governmental narratives of 'resilience-building' and the ways in which principles of stakeholder inclusion and participation are being implemented. When gender is brought into the mix of CBDRRM and resilience-building considerations, Chant's (2008) and Bradshaw's (2013) critical contributions outlined earlier, particularly the 'feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation' and the 'feminisation of disaster response' respectfully, offer a useful vantage point for interrogating the terms of inclusion and impacts of these 'bottom-up' participatory efforts.

### ***2.4.3 Empowerment in an era of resilience-building***

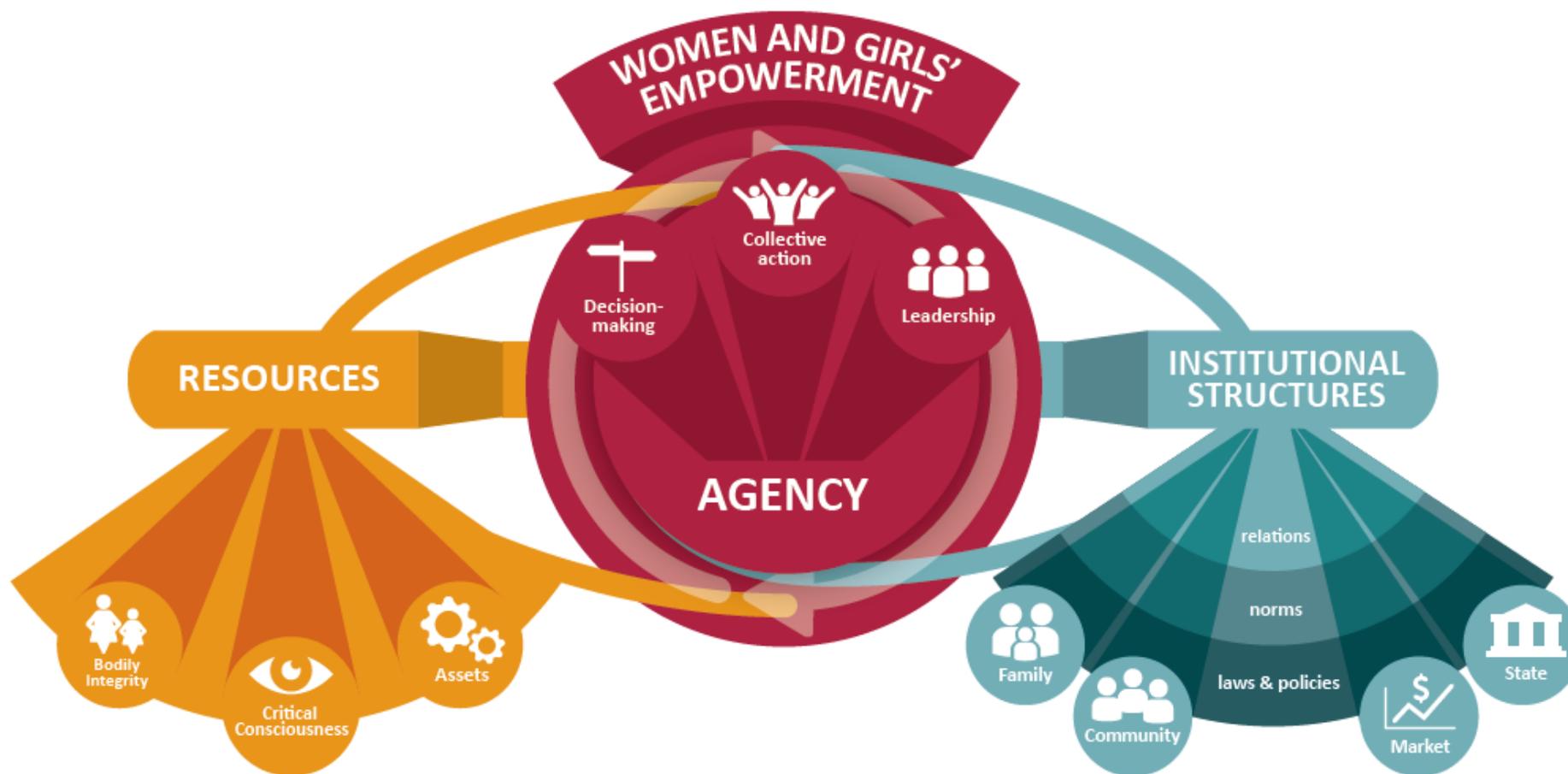
So what constitutes meaningful empowerment in these complex and overlapping processes of 'bottom-up' participation and local resilience-building? In the comprehensive framework developed by Eerdewijk et al. (2017: 13), female empowerment is defined as 'the expansion

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<sup>23</sup> This point was also discussed in interviews with the Centre for Disaster Preparedness and with Josephine Castillos in Manila, Philippines, December 2014.

of choice and strengthening of voice through the transformation of power relations, so women and girls have more control over their lives and futures. It is both a process and an outcome.' Drawing inter alia on Kabeer's (1999, 2001, 2008, 2010) influential work on this topic, expansion of choice translates not only to an increasing set of and social and material assets, options and opportunities, but crucially to having the voice and agency to define and realise one's goals, and to achieve the desired outcome (Sen, 1997). Eerdewijk et al. (2017: 14) summarise these interacting spheres under the headings of agency, resources and institutional structures, with the latter incorporating societal norms, and other social arrangements that 'influence the expressions of agency as well as women and girls' control over resources... in the arenas of the family, community, market and state' (see Figure 2.2). In this framing, considerations of women's empowerment cannot be divorced from power relations, and any claims of empowerment must be evidenced by transformations in 'the structures of constraint' that perpetuate gender inequalities, with changes prospectively occurring at individual, institutional and wider socio-structural scales (see also Kabeer, 2001: 46).

Figure 2.2 A conceptual model of female empowerment



Source: Eerdewijk et al. (2017: 16, Figure 2.3, Dynamics of transformative change)

That Eerdewijk et al.'s (2017) framework has been developed through work commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, serves as testimony to the extent to which women's empowerment has become established as a 'mainstream development concern' (Cornwall, 2016: 342). Its popularity owes much to the afore mentioned 'smart economics' discourse (see World Bank, 2006, 2011) which has managed to convince even the most unlikely of development actors that investing in women and girls makes business sense (Chant, 2012, 2016; Hickel, 2014; Roberts and Soederberg, 2012). Given the steadfast promotion of female empowerment as 'smart economics' and the proclivity for mainstream development and DRRM to uncritically endorse activities premised around female participation, it would seem that the terms and implications of women's inclusion in community organising is deserving of greater attention. In the absence of this, the 'feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation' described by Chant (2008: 182) in relation to anti-poverty programmes may continue unabated in the growing field of CBDRRM (see Bradshaw, 2013: 155) and 'resilience-building', with women bearing the brunt of the burdens for 'building back better'. Chant's (2008) and Bradshaw's (2013) cautions complement the work of many other scholars critical of the packaging and promotion of localism and citizen engagement as a panacea for 'efficient' and 'empowering' development (Cornwall, 2003, 2004b; Dill, 2009; Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Mosse, 1994). As Cornwall (2016:342) contends:

'Much of the narrative focuses on instrumental gains—what women can do for development rather than what development can do for women. Empowerment is treated as a destination reached through development's equivalent of motorways: programmes rolled out over any terrain. But in the process, pathways women are travelling in their own individual or collective journeys of empowerment remain hidden.'

SDG 5 which ambitiously, if unrealistically, aspires to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' by 2030 is a case in point of empowerment's firmly entrenched place within the realm of rhetoric. Similar discourse appears throughout the Goal's indicators. For example, indicator 5.2 strives to 'eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls' and indicator 5.5 to 'ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life'. However, few convincing suggestions as to how these might be achieved are offered. Given the discernible, albeit imperfect, efforts of Agenda 2030 to integrate gender, development, disasters and climate change priorities, the theoretical and practical suggestions advanced through my research arguably have much to contribute to these ongoing discussions. As I argue throughout this thesis, urban development and DRRM policies and programmes must reflect on intersectional

embodiments of risk within particular geographies of inequality. Engendering DRRM and urban resilience-building also necessitates attentiveness to the everyday labours of social reproduction, and to the simultaneous reproduction and subversion of power hierarchies within 'participatory' processes.

## ***2.5 Conclusion: feminist political ecology analyses of urban (disaster) risk***

CBDRRM and resilience-building activities are not neutral exercises to promote public participation. Rather, as this discussion has demonstrated, they are multifaceted political projects that are subjectively constituted and differentially experienced by diverse stakeholders with shared as well as distinct interests, where participation is shaped by existing norms and power relations. Despite the ongoing efforts of feminist scholars committed to advancing more nuanced understandings of gender and (disaster) risk (Bradshaw, 2002, 2013, 2015; Enarson, 2006, 2009, 2013; Enarson and Fordham, 2001; Fordham, 2003; Fordham and Gupta, 2010; Fordham and Ketteridge, 1998), I have argued that little has changed in how gendered needs and interests are perceived and addressed in mainstream DRRM literature and practice. In the Philippines and beyond, considerations of gender and (disaster) risk remain typically fixated around essentialist stereotypes of both men and women that ignore the multiple subjectivities inherent to the socio-spatial politics and embodiments of urban risk and its governance, not to mention the underlying issues of power and powerlessness at the root of vulnerability. Furthermore, akin to Enarson's (2006) observations in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the extensive and unrelenting labours and contributions of poor Filipino women to DRRM are rendered invisible through the reproduction of such essentialisms.

Existing literature on gender and disasters also rarely considers the multiple ways in which these imposed identities are negotiated and subverted in different contexts, not to mention the vital roles that women play in CBDRRM. Consequently, policy prescriptions often miss the mark, while inadvertently reinforcing the stereotypes and power hierarchies that underpin the gender inequalities they are trying to address. While disasters may offer a 'window of opportunity' for alternative voices to be heard and serve as a catalyst for social and political change (Birkmann et al., 2010; Bradshaw, 2013: 154; Pelling and Dill, 2010), neglecting the differential impacts, roles and terms of participation in these processes may make things worse for those who are already marginalised. In the interest of advancing a more nuanced and grounded approach to examining the gendered and classed impacts of risk and disaster, I have adopted an interdisciplinary conceptual lens that draws on critical

disaster scholarship, GAD and urban geography literature, and bring them together through a feminist political ecology framework (Elmhirst, 2011; Elmhirst and Resurreccion, 2008; Rocheleau et al., 1996). These distinct yet related theoretical fields have much to offer in advancing a nuanced understanding of gendered and classed embodiments of 'everyday risk'; an analytic that gives visibility to the social, political and structural drivers of endangerment and vulnerability, not to mention the persistent conditions of insecurity (Allen et al., 2015) that are often lost in traditionally masculinist, techno-scientific appraisals of exceptional or extreme events.

I have situated my work within the body of feminist political ecology scholarship concerned with gendered access to and exclusions from resources (including land and land tenure security) and public infrastructure, and how gender, class and other aspects of social identity shape people's interactions with the environment. In my analysis of how gendered subjectivities, ideologies and identities feature in informal settlers encounters with, and interpretations of, risk and risk governance, the concept of 'everyday risk' (Allen et al., 2015; Bull-Kamanga et al., 2003; Ziervogel et al., 2017), serves as a useful point of departure for unseating objectivist preoccupations with exceptional hazards and the exclusionary techno-scientific solutions and approaches to risk management that they engender. Unterhalter's (2009: 16) notion of slums as 'spatial poverty traps', and the insightful contributions from numerous scholars (Casolo and Doshi, 2013; Chant et al., 2017; Chant and McIlwaine, 2016; Doshi, 2011, 2013a, b; Sultana 2009a,b, 2011; Truelove 2011) on the gendered embodiments of infrastructural and environmental conditions in informal settlements are also helpful in advancing a more intersectional understanding of urban risk and risk management.

Seeking to move beyond existing preoccupations with vulnerability that homogenise women and oversimplify if not misrepresent their experiences by classifying them solely as victims, I draw on conceptual theorisations from GAD literature on vulnerability, empowerment and participation. Molyneux (1985) and Moser's (1989) concepts of practical and strategic needs and interests are useful in thinking about why certain groups are more vulnerable than others. Kabeer's (1999, 2001, 2008, 2010) and Eerdewijk et al.'s (2017) ideas on empowerment further disrupt apolitical, essentialist reproductions of women as passive victims, by drawing attention to individual and collective forms of agency and to the multiple ways in which agency and empowerment are constituted within an across scales. Reflecting on the 'structures of constraint' (Kabeer, 2001) that inhibit processes of personal and collective empowerment is also helpful in pinpointing the entry points that policy-makers and practitioners can target in their

gender mainstreaming efforts. In addition to the concepts mentioned above, my analysis of the gendered and classed implications of participating in homeowner associations and local risk management activities is informed by Cornwall's (2002, 2004a) writing on invited and popular or invented (see Mirafab, 2004) spaces of participation, as well as Chant's (2008) construct of the 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation'. Before delving into my empirical findings, the following chapter discusses the feminist epistemological principles and methods underpinning my data collection. In addition to providing a detailed summary of the five study sites and the research process as a whole, it also offers some reflections on the limitations of this thesis.

## 3 Methodology

Building on the theoretical and epistemological frameworks touched on in the previous two chapters, this chapter traces the evolution of my research project from preliminary field visits in 2014 and 2015 through to my main period of fieldwork in 2016 and 2017. In particular, I discuss the feminist and participatory methodologies that both inspired and enabled this study, and the rationale for adopting associated methods of data collection, sharing my reflections on the process as a whole, and my positionality within it. This chapter also provides a more detailed description of the five study sites from which respondents were drawn. It concludes with a brief discussion of the limitations of this study, a point I will revisit in Chapter 7.

### ***3.1 Feminist methods***

#### ***3.1.1 Power, positionality and knowledge-making: feminist perspectives***

The research questions posed by this thesis are premised around an understanding of risk, vulnerability, and resilience as subjective socio-political constructs, encompassing a multiplicity of truths and knowledges as they materialise in people's day-to-day realities. In accordance with this conceptual framework, feminist epistemologies which critically consider the production of knowledge and the positionality of knowledge-maker(s) in both process and effect (Duran, 1991) offer a constructive lens for exploring the gendered and broader political causes and consequences of risk, insecurity and community organising in urban informal settlements. On this basis, the methods and methodology<sup>24</sup> selected for this study are inspired by a feminist methodological framework, which, as Eichler (1997: 12) contends, is not so much a research method in itself, but rather a perspective that 'is guided by feminist theory... aims to create social change... and strives to represent human diversity.' In essence, feminist methods seek to actively and consciously resist the essentialist, binary thinking that has traditionally informed scientific research (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002: 88–9). This includes actively working to redress the biases and power dynamics that traditionally shape researcher and participant positionality

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<sup>24</sup> Following the definitions offered by Sandra Harding (1987: 2–3), in my study, the term 'method' refers to the tools and techniques used to gather data, while 'methodology' pertains to a theoretical means of analysing and reflecting on the research process itself (see also Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002: 11–2).

and 'expertise' and which privilege certain repositories of knowledge and 'truth' over others (ibid.: 41-59; see also Edwards and Mauthner, 2002; Maynard, 1994).

As has been discussed at length in the previous two chapters, socio-political power dynamics and hierarchies also play a critical role in shaping risk, development and resilience discourse, policy and practice at both a local and international scale. All too often, certain groups remain absent or silenced in knowledge-making processes; their personal experiences relegated as unimportant, subjective, and unscientific. In an effort to counter dominant epistemological hierarchies prominent in objectivist (and arguably masculinist) approaches to research on risk, climate change and urban development, this study adopts a different position; one that explicitly values subjectivity of experience and a diversity of perspectives, taking the feminist view that 'the personal is political' and thereby constitutes a worthy repository of knowledge and learning.

The process of intentionally disturbing the conventional authority of the researcher to create a more equitable platform and dynamic of knowledge exchange (Reinharz, 1992) necessitates continuous self-reflection on the ways in which the researcher's socio-economic status, privilege (in various forms) and social identity may influence the research process (Madge, 1993). The methods and principles informing the data collection for this study have been employed with the intention of levelling out hierarchical dynamics, and facilitating personal reflections and knowledge exchange between myself and research participants, that can contribute to a broadened understanding of risk and resilience, and with it, the possibility of transforming existing social and structural arrangements towards more just and inclusive ends. This project is aspirational, and does not entail a rejection of objectivity, but rather recognises the influence of power and the interdependence between objective and subjective forms of knowing; of 'the need to replace the "weak" objectivity of non-feminist research with the "strong" objectivity of standpoint epistemologies... characterised by a strong reflexivity which "requires that the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge"' (Eichler, 1997: 15, citing Harding, 1992: 458).

### ***3.1.2 Participatory research***

In accordance with the view that there is no single feminist (or female) standpoint (Fonow and Cook, 2005; Harding, 1991; Letherby, 2003), techniques or approaches for conducting feminist social research are similarly undefined (Kelly et al., 1992; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002: 147; Reinharz, 1992: 240). However the above discussed importance of reflexivity as a means of reconfiguring structures of power and privilege, the value awarded

to 'the personal', and the unapologetically political objective of inspiring emancipatory social change, are recurrent themes throughout the literature on feminist methods, indicating a certain ethical coherence between the variant approaches (Maynard, 1994: 21). Perhaps as a result of these shared principles, techniques that encourage meaningful respondent participation feature prominently in feminist research practice (Caretta, 2016).

Participatory research is an exercise in the co-production of knowledge, wherein research respondents are 'active in the construction of knowledge about their lives and researchers attempt to be more transparent about their roles' (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2220). As Cornwall and Jewkes (1995: 1674) contend:

'[p]articipatory research offers ways of making conventional science more relevant, by creating an environment in which new knowledge can be synthesized through a dialogue between western scientific and local knowledges... [It] is about respecting and understanding the people with and for whom researchers work. It is about developing a realisation that local people are knowledgeable and that they, together with researchers, can work towards analyses and solutions. It involves recognising the rights of those whom research concerns, enabling people to set their own agendas for research and development and so giving them ownership over the process.'

In short therefore, participatory research involves an attempt to move away from an objectifying and extractive form of research, to one that utilises 'knowledge for action' (ibid.: 1667; Park, 2006) and which explicitly seeks to expose and challenge inequalities both in the research process itself, and in wider society (Cancian, 1996: 189; Kinpaisby, 2008: 292). On this basis, Caretta and Riaño (2016) contend that instating a feminist perspective into participatory research is equally critical, if participatory methods are to do what they say on the package.

According to Bell and Jolly (2001: 1), combining gender awareness and participatory approaches can be a useful means of unlocking men and women's voices for gender-redistributive change and gender-sensitive programme and policy development. Critical to this process is the ability of the researcher to create a space in which different individuals are able to express themselves (and be heard) in a manner that they are comfortable with (ibid.). However, as Enria (2016: 320) describes, the reality of creating truly inclusive spaces for participation are fraught with challenges. Beyond simply acknowledging the existence of power differentials in social research settings, efforts to embed participation and inclusion all too frequently fail to adequately subvert dominant power dynamics and end up reproducing existing patterns of exclusion and inequality (Chhotray, 2004; Cornwall, 2004b; Mosse, 1994, 2001), masked by what Brun and Lund (2010: 812-3) have aptly termed a 'spectacle of... collaboration'. This is further exacerbated

by stereotypical approaches to incorporating gender which focus on women and typically ignore men's gendered needs, thereby alienating rather than encouraging men while also brushing over the complexities of gender relations (Bell and Jolly, 2001: 2).

Reflecting on her research in Sierra Leone which used street theatre to engage economically marginalised youth and their communities in discussions about violence, Enria (2016: 325) maintains that while 'participatory methods such as street theatre and empathetic spaces for discussion make for more egalitarian research; (*sic.*) they do not efface the difference that exists between us' or 'translate into an erasure of power differentials.' Not discounting the emancipatory potential of cooperatively producing and interpreting knowledge, she also notes that 'the challenge of societal transformation and intersubjective understanding requires more than an adequate methodological toolkit' (ibid.: 327). On this basis, participatory research processes might be better conceived of as one part of a much wider programme of social transformation that might (ideally) continue long after the research has been completed.

Recognising the importance of scale to political ecology analyses (Neumann, 2009), as Stahelin and Lawson (1995: 331) assert, when attempting to 'link interpersonal and household relations with community, national, and international processes and structures... researchers should be open to the potential for layering a variety of methods' (see also Purvis and Maynard, 1994). Beebeejaun et al. (2014: 37) also argue that the co-production of knowledge often requires employing 'beyond text' alternative methods to engage the local community and facilitate a collaborative exchange of information where research is conducted "'with" communities rather than "on" communities.' With these views in mind, my examination of the gender-risk-resilience nexus from the bottom-up so to speak, employed a mixed methods approach, incorporating participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participatory photo elicitation with 83 informal settlers (see tables 3.1 and 3.2 below). These methods were selected with the intention of capturing the complexities and nuances embedded within individual (and collective) experiences of risk, response, resistance and resilience as they feature across different social and political scales.

The combined use of visual and oral mediums of communication and of individual and group interviews served not only to facilitate personal (and collective) storytelling and reflection among respondents. It also helped to rebalance the power dynamics embedded within social research by giving participants more direct control over the nature of discussions and a diversity of mediums and spaces through which they could choose to

engage in the research according to their individual comforts and preferences. These methods of data collection are discussed in more detail below, prefaced by an account of my time in the Philippines, including preliminary fieldwork and site selection in Metro Cebu. The chapter concludes with some personal reflections on my research design and on how my positionality as a non-Filipino, English speaking female researcher shaped my experience in the field, including my relationships with respondents, and the potential implications this has had on my findings.

## ***3.2 Preliminary fieldwork and site selection***

### ***3.2.1 Background***

From the outset, my research has developed (and been consciously designed) in an iterative manner, with trips to the Philippines interspersed with longer periods of reflection and writing in the UK. This process began with two preliminary field visits in December 2014 and September 2015, with the purpose of identifying an appropriate city in which to explore my original research interests, and from there, to make contact with relevant individuals and organisations. Purposive (also known as selective) sampling (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973) offered a practical means of initiating this process, whereby I contacted informants whom I felt were likely to have knowledge relevant to my research interests and be both willing and able to share it (Bernard, 2002; Glaser, 1978; Oliver, 2006; Tongco, 2007). Specialist Philippine-based governmental, non-governmental and community organisations were identified through a combination of desk-based internet searches using English key words such as climate change, disaster, disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), poverty, and gender, as well as from informal conversations and recommendations from various individuals, including my PhD supervisor who had worked in the Philippines from the early 1990s to 2004.

Over the course of my seven weeks of preliminary fieldwork, I met with numerous governmental departments, NGOs and academics based in Metro Cebu, Iloilo and Metro Manila, who helped me gain a better understanding of the current DRRM and gender and development landscapes in the Philippines, including perceived gaps in knowledge and implementation challenges. I was warmly welcomed into a vast network of practitioners working across these sectors, with each interview often producing new contacts and opportunities. In total, over the course of these two preliminary trips, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of organisations and individuals, precipitating my selection of Metro Cebu as my study site (see Chapter 1 for details on rationale) and my

relationship with the Fellowship for Organizing Endeavours (FORGE); the local NGO whose support has been pivotal to this study (see section 3.2.3 below).

### ***3.2.2 Translation***

Both prior to and during my time in the field, I worked with a Cebuano language teacher (online) to help me develop my understanding of the language and conversational abilities. While my command of Cebuano improved to the point that I was able to hold broken day-to-day conversations and extract key themes from meetings or other discussions, the personal and political nature of my research meant that the specific language used by respondents in describing their day-to-day realities, and its cultural significance, was critical to informing my understanding and analysis of their situations. In an effort to circumvent these linguistic barriers, a few weeks into my fieldwork, I started working with a hired interpreter, Regina Yoma, who at the time was completing a Masters in Anthropology at the University of San Carlos. Regina and I were put in contact by her professor, Leny Godinez Ocasiones, who was actively involved in the Women's Resource Centre of the Visayas, one of the first organisations I came to know (and remain close to) in Cebu. She expressed an interest in my research topic and appeared to share my values and concern for social justice issues affecting urban poor communities and other marginalised groups.

Coming from Cavite City in Luzon, despite not being a native Visayan speaker, Regina's command of both English and Cebuano proved more than adequate in translating between myself and local respondents. Where clarification was needed, she would switch to Tagalog to ensure that the conversation had been interpreted accurately, and if still unsure, we would make a note of the word(s) and the time on the recording so that we could follow up on it later. Mindful however that in being outsiders (albeit in slightly different respects), certain nuances may be lost on us and there would invariably be aspects of the language or culture that we missed or failed to understand the significance of, I hired Yanoko Masuba, a native Visayan speaker who was also an anthropology student from the university, to work with us for a month, accompanying us to the interviews, verifying the accuracy of Regina's translations and offering additional interpretations and reflections. He also helped us to sharpen the language we were using to explore the subjects of interest, sharing invaluable cultural insights into the origins of certain words and practices; contributions which were instrumental in refining my ability to hear and see in the field. Regina's aptitude for switching between languages, her attention to detail, sense of humour and natural ability to relate to others and make people feel at ease were equally

fundamental to the relationships and trust that developed between us and respondents, and to ensuring that the stories and perspectives vocalised in the interviews were accurately recorded and understood.

### ***3.2.3 Making contact and identifying key themes***

FORGE was established in the late 1980s following the ousting of President Ferdinand Marcos from office in 1986, with the aim of supporting participatory governance and people-centred sustainable development in urban poor communities of Metro Cebu. The organisation is among the oldest, and one of very few NGOs in Metro Cebu, working explicitly with the urban poor to address the numerous interconnected issues affecting the day-to-day livelihoods and wellbeing of informal settlement residents. FORGE's work is premised on a vision of being 'a sustainable social development NGO empowering the marginalised sector towards just and resilient communities' by enabling 'the poor and marginalised communities in identifying and addressing personal, family, community and social issues and risks through community organising and social outreach' (FORGE, 2018: no page).

The organisation has two operational divisions; the Community Organising Division (COD), which conducts outreach and supports community organising and advocacy interventions in urban poor neighbourhoods, and the Social Outreach Division (SOD) that works to support women and children who are victims of commercial sexual abuse and exploitation. Given the nature of my research, my main point of contact in FORGE was the COD, whose remit includes inter alia issues of land tenure security, access to basic services and site development, DRRM, and programmes which try to foster healthy family relationships. The COD shared an interest in my proposed study on gender, (disaster) risk and urban poverty, and offered to facilitate my contact with residents of informal settlements through their vast network of partner homeowner associations<sup>25</sup> in exchange for access to my research findings.

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<sup>25</sup> In accordance with Republic Act 99041, the Magna Carta for Homeowners and Homeowners' Associations, these organisations are defined as non-profit corporations that have registered with applicable national bodies and which are:

'organised by owners or purchasers of a lot in a subdivision/village or other residential real property located within the jurisdiction of the association; or awardees, usufructuaries, legal occupants and/or lessees of a housing unit and/or lot in a government socialised or economic housing or relocation project and other urban estates; or underprivileged and

An initial round of ‘fact finding’ was conducted in January/February, 2016, in which I organised ten focus groups with men and women living in informal settlements across four barangays, (see Table 3.1), and facilitated a discussion around the broad themes of my research; gender relations, risk and disaster (see Figure 3.1). Contact with respondents from nine of the focus groups was facilitated by FORGE who disseminated a brief outline of my research interests to representatives from various homeowner associations in their network, who in turn solicited interested participants from their members and local community. An additional focus group was also conducted with a women’s group in Mambaling through the help of Lihok Pilipina, a local NGO working to address the needs of women living in low-income households in Metro Cebu. In this round of preliminary data collection, my intentions were not so much to analyse the group interactions, per se, as is traditionally the case in focus groups (Wilkinson, 1998: 182 citing Morgan, 1988), but rather to facilitate a group discussion around my research interests to gauge relevance to the communities in question, and to narrow my line of inquiry.

*Table 3.1: Preliminary focus group respondents by sitio and sex*

NEIGHBOURHOOD (SITIO, BARANGAY, CITY)	FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Laguerta and Tarcom, Busay, Cebu City	6	13	19
Alaska, Mambaling, Cebu City	6	12	18
Zone 3, Mantuyong Mandaue City	6	6	12
Aroma, Subangdako, Mandaue City	6	6	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>61</b>

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homeless citizens as defined under existing laws in the process of being accredited as usufructuaries or awardees of ownership rights under the Community Mortgage Program (CMP), Land Tenure Assistance Program (LTAP) and other similar programs in relation to a socialised housing project actually being implemented by the national government or the LGU’ (Republic of the Philippines, 2009: 2–3).

*Figure 3.1: Focus group participants completing profiles with the assistance of FORGE staff*



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

Focus group discussions were framed by a semi-structured questionnaire that was translated in English and Cebuano, consisting of four thematic categories. Each session began with a brief introduction about me and the study, as well as by the other facilitators (namely staff from FORGE and Lihok Pilipina who helped to translate the discussions) and

focus group participants, after which respondents were supported to complete a short profile (see Appendix A) about themselves and their household circumstances. Included within this profile was a question asking participants to rate on a scale from one to ten how adequate their household resources were in meeting their households' daily needs (one being completely insufficient, ten being fully adequate in covering food, health and shelter-related necessities). Individual responses to this question were then discussed collectively as a precursor to questions on gender, risk and disaster (generally in that order) (see Appendix B). This ordering of topics with disasters at the end, was intentionally chosen to minimise unconscious bias in the responses of participants connected to the terms and language being explored in each section.

The number of participants in each group was limited to six or seven people to ensure all individuals had time and space to contribute. Mindful of the power dynamics that can (and do) emerge within group discussions (Stewart et al., 2007: 28–30), the focus groups were arranged according to barangay and gender, and where possible consisted of two individuals in each of the following age brackets (18-35; 36-55; 56+). This enabled a comparison of perspectives (and identification of potential areas of conflict) between men and women within and across the different communities, while also offering insights into any gerontological considerations warranting further investigation at a later stage of the research. These group discussions proved incredibly valuable in highlighting the different (and common) issues and priorities between these communities, as well as for establishing relationships with key individuals in the communities, laying the foundations for the main period of fieldwork which followed.

### ***3.2.4 Site selection***

Early on in the research process, I decided to focus my study on informal settlements in the two most 'highly urbanised' (and populous) cities of Metro Cebu; Cebu City and Mandaue City. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the classification of 'highly urbanised' means that these municipalities have a degree of jurisdictional autonomy not awarded to the other cities of Metro Cebu which fall under the mandates of provincial government. By including study sites in both Cebu City and Mandaue City, my research offers insights into the complex political landscape underpinning urban governance in Metro Cebu, and the associated challenges of managing 'risk' and other issues that transcend administrative boundaries and have multiple scales of impact. The barangays and sitios originally selected as field sites (Laguerta and Tarcom, Busay and Alaska, Mambaling in Cebu City and Zone 3, Mantuyong and Aroma, Subangdako in Mandaue City) were chosen on the basis that they: a) have a high

population of informal settlers; b) have been identified by the COD at FORGE as ‘danger zones’, or in other words, are considered especially prone to various forms of climate-related and environmental hazards; and c) are areas where FORGE has established relationships with homeowner associations and the local community. They also collectively encompass a diverse range of topographic, geographic and environmental characteristics, including coastal (site 1 Mambaling), upland (site 2 Busay), river/creek (site 3 Mantuyong) and low-lying inland settlements (site 4 Subangdako), revealing distinct and shared gendered political ecologies of risk (and response) among communities exposed to different types of environmental hazards (see Figure 3.2). During the first few weeks of my fourth and main field visit, I incorporated a fifth study site in Lower Mahiga of barangay Banilad, Cebu City, following an invitation to visit the area by the president of a local homeowner association. In learning about the multiple and overlapping forms of risk affecting this community located on the outskirts of the city near the source of the Mahiga Creek (see Figure 3.2, site 5), I decided to include it as an additional study site, as it exemplifies many of the interconnected themes I interrogate in my research.

Figure 3.2: Field sites in Cebu City and Mandaue City



Source: Google Maps, accessed 26 April, 2018.

Another unexpected event that shaped this research emerged when, a few weeks after my initial focus group discussions with residents of Zone 3, Mantuyong, a massive fire broke out in their community, destroying several hundred homes (mostly in informal settlements) across three barangays, leaving over one thousand individuals homeless. When I returned for my main field visit a few months later, former residents were living in the parking lot of the derelict Cebu International Convention Centre (CICC) in neighbouring barangay Guizo (see Figure 3.2, CICC, green circle), alongside the other fire victims awaiting permission from the Mandaue City government to return to their original lots. Despite their new place of abode and the difficult circumstances they now found themselves in, community members remained happy to participate in the study. Their testimonies and experiences offer invaluable insights into some of the challenges encountered by informal settlers in the immediate aftermath of a 'disaster', as well as the role homeowner associations and community organising within this landscape.

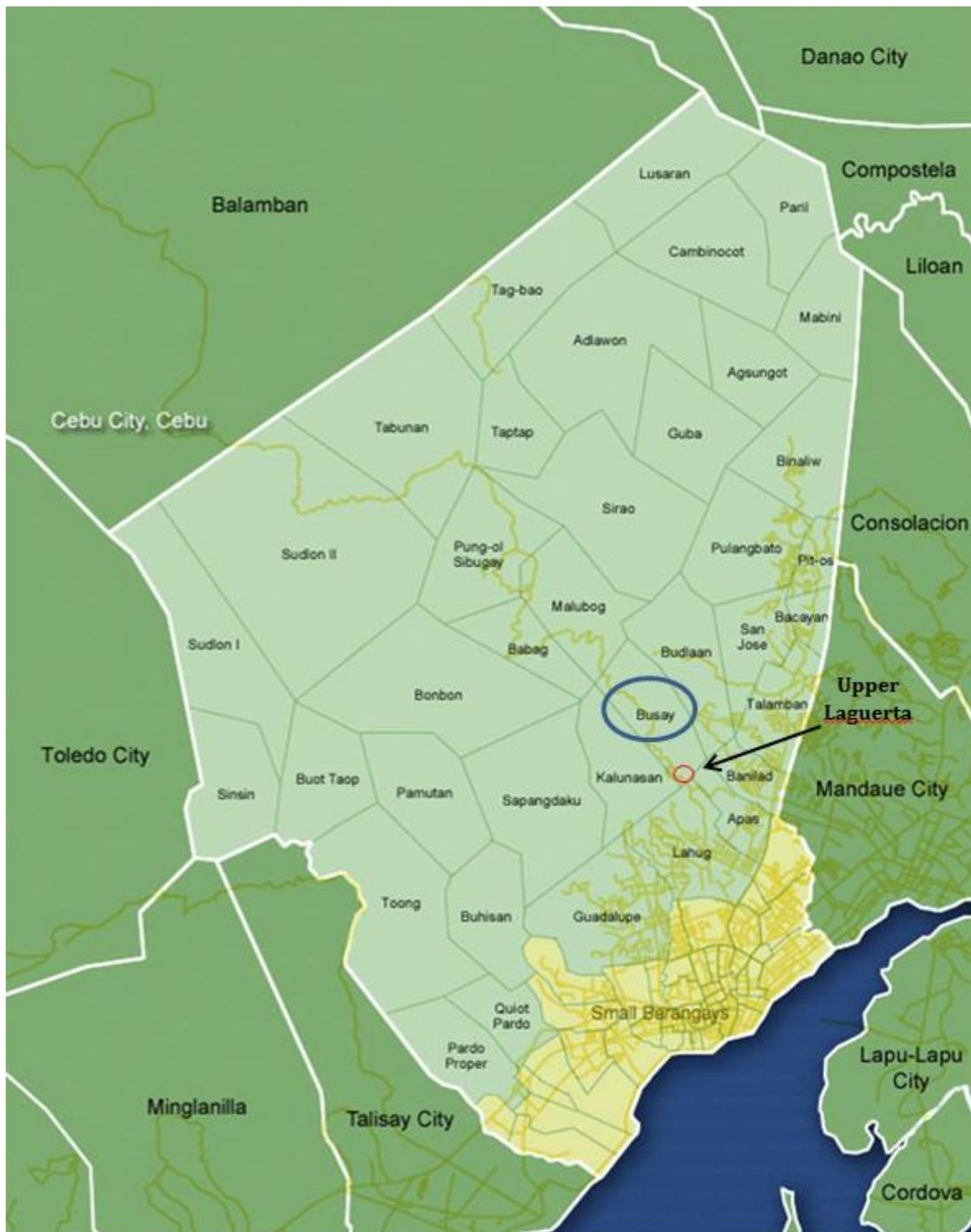
As mentioned, all five communities are considered informal settlements, characterised by densely packed rudimentary, light material construction housing, the absence of universal access to potable water, sanitation and/or other basic infrastructure, and where the majority of residents, despite effectively 'owning' their own home, do not possess title deeds for the land on which they reside, making them vulnerable to eviction and/or demolition. This said, the specifics informing their land tenure insecurity differ between the areas, with some communities residing on publicly owned land (Busay, Banilad, Mantuyong), others privately owned (Mambaling and Subangdako), some threatened with imminent demolition (Mambaling), others living in a municipal relocation site (Busay), and in the case of the fire victims, some living in temporary shelter in a state of limbo as to whether and when they would be able to return to their previous lot. These differences in land ownership and tenure situations between the communities encompass some of the various circumstances that informal settlers are likely to find themselves at one point or another over the course of their lives; a diversity of perspectives that might not have emerged had the research only focused on one or two areas. Furthermore, considering these multiple study sites facilitates analyses on the implications of land ownership for the rights and bargaining power of occupants threatened with eviction; a critical variable informing of land (and risk) politics in Metro Cebu (Etemadi, 2000, 2004; Thirkell, 1996). To help contextualise the empirical discussions in the chapters which follow, a brief description of each field site is offered below.

### ***3.3 Study site description***

#### ***3.3.1 Laguerta-Tarcom Busay, Cebu City***

Sitios Upper Laguerta and Tarcom (hereafter referred to as Laguerta) are located in the uplands spanning the rather ambiguous border between barangays Lahug and Busay towards the northeast of Cebu's City Centre (see Figure 3.3). The land is owned by the Cebu City government, purchased in the early 2000s with the purpose of housing families evicted from 'danger zones' or displaced from other informal settlements in the city. Consequently, the majority of the households residing in the area have been relocated from communities that have been or are likely to be demolished, with the first of these resettled families arriving in the area around 2004. The landscape is characterised by homes of light-weight material constructed using a combination of wood, bamboo, plastic tarpaulin, metal sheeting and occasionally concrete, which are densely packed and precariously perched on the steep slopes of otherwise green rolling hills, visible as far as the eye can see in all directions (see Figure 3.4) At the bottom of the valley, next to the community square and basketball court, is a river, adjacent to which runs an unpaved road which is the main point of entry for residents to and from the city. Across the north-eastern part of the valley, privately-owned mansions surrounded by majestic concrete walls are sporadically scattered throughout hills. The peripheral location, unpaved roads and inhospitable topography of Laguerta leave it outside the reach of public transportation, requiring residents to pay a 20 peso (equivalent to USD 40 cents) *habal-habal* (motorcycle) fee, or walk an arduous 45 minutes through the valley to reach the nearest jeepney stand. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *habal-habal* driving is a key livelihood for male residents in the area, with some families also running *sari-sari* (small grocery) shops or *carinderias* (occasional home-based eateries) from their homes. Respondents are members of Tarcom Upper Laguerta Homeowners Association (TULHOA) or the Tabarno Homeowners Association (TAHAS).

Figure 3.3: Map of barangays in Cebu City showing location of Laguerta, Busay



Source: <http://www.cebuvatch.com/index.php/maps/cebu-city-2.html>, accessed 1 March, 2016.

Figure 3.4 Vistas of Laguerta



Top left: A view of Laguerta taken from the valley below. Top right: A wooden house built on a landslide prone hillside. Bottom left: A drainage system constructed by community members in partnership with FORGE. Bottom right: The *habal-habal* stand and community basketball court in the valley of Laguerta. Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

### ***3.3.2 Alaska, Mambaling, Cebu City***

Alaska in barangay Mambaling is a populous inner city settlement near the downtown port area and new multi-million pesos South Road Properties (SRP) development in Cebu City, which is home to the luxurious commercial and residential SM Seaside complex, reputed to be the third largest mall in the Philippines and the tenth largest in the world (see Figure 3.5). Its name, Alaska, refers to the white sand beaches that used to stretch along the area's coastline, now dominated by an array of tightly packed makeshift homes balancing on bamboo stilts above a muddy, refuse-cluttered shore that disappears during high tide (see Figure 3.6 and Figure 4.1). The area encompasses a mix of private and state-owned plots, with no visible demarcation to distinguish one from the other, bar the occasional concrete wall or barbed wire fence, presumably erected by a private landowner to deter potential squatters from building. Where Laguerta has the feel and appearance of a rural village, the sights, sounds and smells of Alaska are much more congruent with those stereotypical of a congested urban informal settlement. The barangay is reputed for housing some of the largest and poorest slums in the city (of which Alaska is one); its central location near the port, public market and several shopping malls attractive to low-income residents for the ease of access it provides to various income-generating opportunities around the city. Respondents were drawn from the Alaska Emergency Response Team (ALERT), itself composed of volunteers from different homeowner associations, all of which are members of the Alaska Federation of informal settlers. Research respondents included those residing on private lots, predominantly members of Sitio Tanke Residents Association (SITAPRA), as well as those on publicly-owned land, many of whom were beneficiaries of the Slum Improvement and Resettlement (SIR) Programme; a national social housing and infrastructure initiative launched in the 1980s that includes a repayment scheme through which residents can secure a land title from the city.

Figure 3.5: Map of barangays in Cebu City showing location of Alaska, Mambaling



Source: <http://www.cebuvatch.com/index.php/maps/cebu-city-2.html>, accessed 1 March, 2016.

Figure 3.6: Vistas of Alaska Mambaling



Top left: Alaska's coastline with SM Seaside Mall and SRP in the distance. Top right: One of the main streets entering into the settlement. Bottom left: Light material housing common to the area. Bottom right: Stagnant water sits in a clogged drainage canal next to a line of water meters. Source: Author's photographs, 2016 and 2017.

### 3.3.3 Lower Mahiga, Banilad, Cebu City

Lower Mahiga is an area in the southwest of barangay Banilad in Cebu City (see Figure 3.7). Respondents, all of whom are members of Lower Mahiga *Inahan sa Kanunayng Panabang* (translating to the Lower Mahiga Mother of Continuous Help - LMISKP) homeowners association, live in a settlement of a few hundred households located in a valley surrounded by lush green hills at the source of the Mahiga Creek which is one of the main waterways in Metro Cebu running along the Mandaue and Cebu City border. Like Laguerta, the sitio has a

provincial feel to it, however despite geographically falling within Cebu City's administrative boundary, the land is owned by the provincial government (see Figure 3.8). Adjacent to the settlement in the surrounding hills is the prestigious Maria Luisa gated community, the so-called 'Beverly Hills' of Cebu, housing many of the city's rich and famous. A narrow, paved, pot hole strewn road running from the back of Gaisano Country Mall through a number of small sitios until it meets a dead end offers the only point of entry for residents to and from the city, most easily travelled by *habal-habal* and costing residents 15 to 20 pesos (equivalent to USD 35-40 cents) to reach the nearest jeepney stall.

Figure 3.7: Map of barangays in Cebu City showing location of Lower Mahiga, Banilad



Source: <http://www.cebuvatch.com/index.php/maps/cebu-city-2.html>, accessed 1 March, 2016.

*Figure 3.8 Vistas of Lower Mahiga, Banilad*

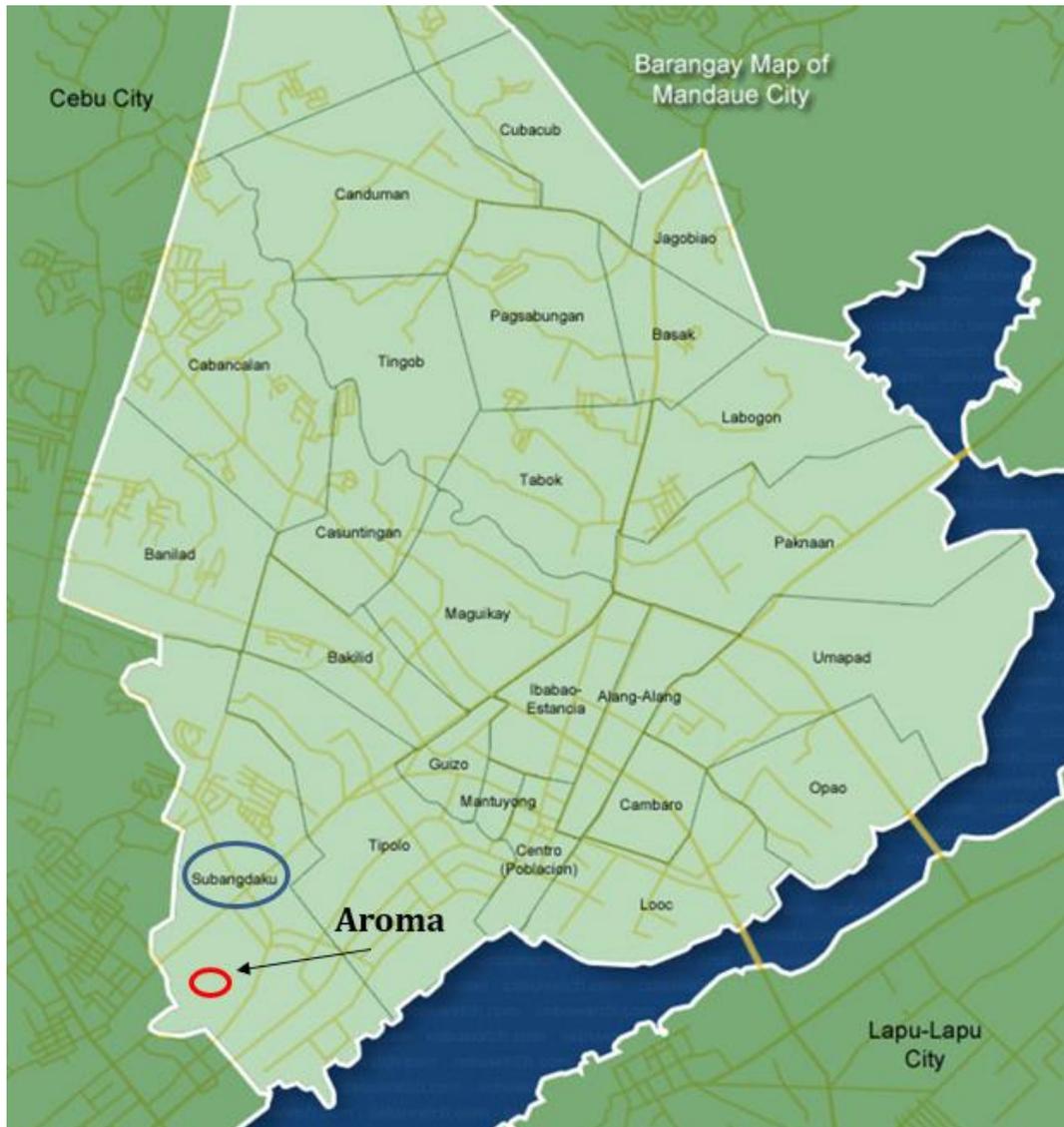


Top: the main road leading into Lower Mahiga. Bottom: Houses of Lower Mahiga. Source: Photographs by Glenn, LMISKP, 2016.

### ***3.3.4 Aroma, Subangdako, Mandaue City***

Sitio Aroma of Subangdako in Mandaue City is a low-lying inland informal settlement (see Figure 3.9) about a hundred metres from the busy M. Logarta Avenue, across the street from SM Mandaue Mall and a short walk from the section of the Mahiga creek, which in July 2016 saw the demolition and displacement of several hundred informal settlers who had been residing along its banks. The land is owned by the Tanchan family and is surrounded in all directions by other privately-owned plots, with two factories enclosing its northern and western border, and a previously vacant lot that has been recently fenced-in to the east displaying Do Not Trespass and Manila Development Corporation (MDC) signs, pending the construction of high rise condominiums and a commercial centre in a joint investment by Ayala and Aboitiz, two of the wealthiest families in the country. Since November 2016, when this eastern lot was fenced in, entry to and from the settlement for Aroma's two thousand plus residents has been restricted to a single pathway at the south end of the site just off the main road (see Figure 3.10). The community is serviced by good public transportation links between Mandaue and Cebu City, enabling residents to move easily and relatively inexpensively between their homes and the port, malls and nearby markets where many residents engage in various income-generating activities. Respondents are members of the Sitio Aroma Homeowner Association (SAHA), representing approximately 100 of the estimated 400 households within the settlement.

Figure 3.9: Map of barangays in Mandaue City showing location of Aroma, Subangdako



Source: <http://www.cebwatch.com/index.php/maps/mandaue-city-2.html>, accessed 1 March, 2016.

Figure 3.10 Vistas of Sitio Aroma, Subangdako

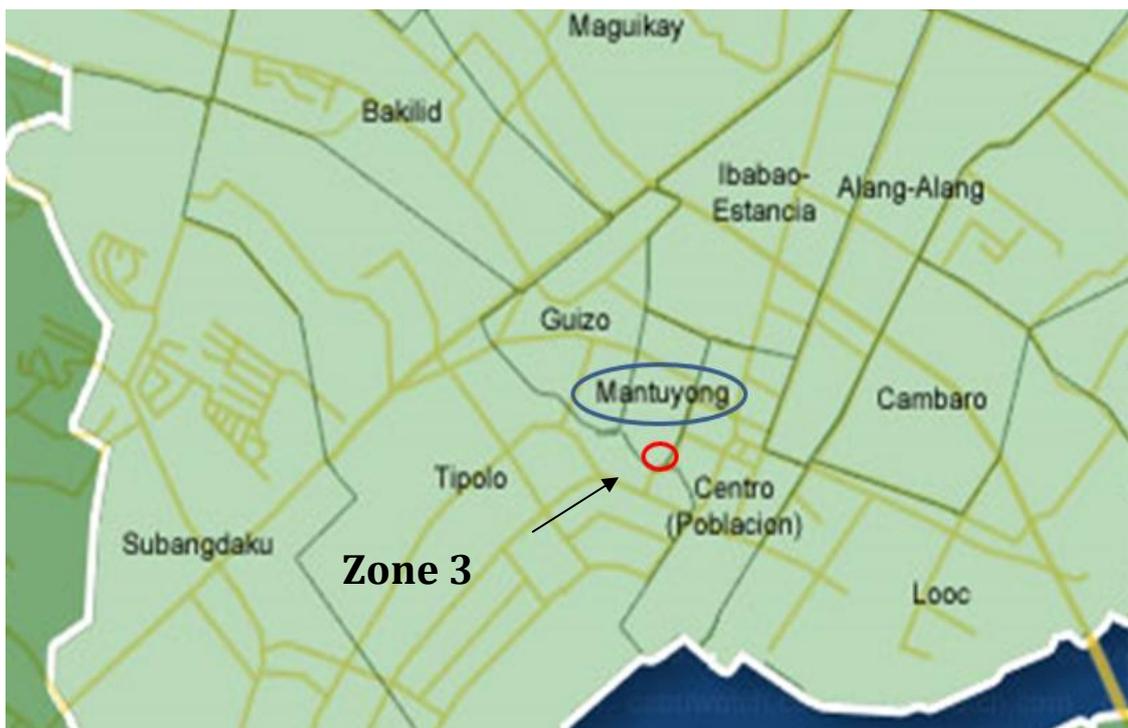


Top: The only entrance into Aroma. Middle: A view from the main road, with the MDC development (which sits to the east of Aroma) in the distance. Bottom: Light material housing surrounding Aroma's communal basketball court. Source: Author's photographs, 2016 and 2017.

### 3.3.5 Zone 3, Mantuyong, Mandaue City

Zone 3 in Mantuyong is another inner city sitio, adjacent to the Public Market in the downtown area of Mandaue City (see Figure 3.10); a densely populated informal settlement with houses spanning the Tipolo Creek, connected by an intricate network of bamboo and wooden bridges sitting atop the concrete retaining walls that offer reinforcement to the banks of the creek (see Figure 3.11) The land is owned by the Mandaue City government (see Appendix C). However as mentioned above, in March 2016 the entire community was destroyed in a fire, after which residents were moved to the parking lot of the decommissioned CICC while the municipal government landfilled and re-blocked the lot in accordance with the city's residential planning regulations. Consequently, for the main period of my fieldwork, the CICC become the primary site from which discussions and meetings with Zone 3 residents took place. Respondents are members of the Mantuyong Urban Poor Homeowner Association (MUPHAI).

Figure 3.10: Map of barangays in Mandaue City showing location of Zone 3, Mantuyong



Source: <http://www.cebwatch.com/index.php/maps/mandaue-city-2.html>, accessed 1 March, 2016.

*Figure 3.11 Zone 3 before and after the fire in March 2016.*





Top: Houses of Zone 3 along the Tipolo Creek prior to the fire. Middle: Landfilling of the lot after the fire. Bottom: Reclamation of the lot partially completed. Source: Author's photographs, 2016 and 2017.

### ***3.4 Main period of fieldwork***

#### ***3.4.1 Background***

The activities and reflection undertaken in my preliminary fieldwork proved a critical means of identifying potential biases as well as testing out strategies to minimise their effect. In the focus group discussions, I was able to familiarise myself with local colloquialisms and identify ways of asking questions to elicit reflection in respondents on the topics I was interested in. Reflecting on my findings from these discussions, I came to the conclusion that the gendered dynamics and intricate nuances I sought to understand and uncover around experiences of risk, disaster and resilience would require a creative and flexible approach. While the political economy of (disaster) risk and land tenure insecurity were clearly connected and warranted more in-depth examination, the gendered undercurrents at play within these spaces and spheres of interaction were less obvious, though clearly present; apparent most notably in the marked feminised presence in community organising activities, and in the subtle differences between male and female discussions during the preliminary focus groups.

Furthermore, as articulated by Staheli and Lawson, (1995: 323) '[t]he language we use can both obscure and expose that which we subsequently "see" theoretically,

empirically, and politically. There is a dialectical relationship between concepts and language and the material social relations through which they are constructed.’ In as much as my positionality was influencing the questions I identified as important and the language I was using to explore these points of inquiry, I was mindful that it might equally lead me to interpret people’s stories and other field observations differently than the respondents themselves. As such, if I was to decipher these dynamics more accurately and in a manner that is cognisant with local cultures and perspectives, I felt as though I needed to first distance myself from the theories and assumptions I carried with me to the field; from the ideas and thinking that led me to frame my questions around gendered divisions of labour, family relationships, intra household decision-making, and encounters with risks. Though important points of inquiry, this line of questioning seemed to encourage largely superficial descriptions of landslides, floods, and familial and spousal dynamics rather than the emotional impacts and personal significance awarded to these experiences.

Getting the sense that there was more going on beneath the surface of this gender-risk-resilience nexus, but not quite knowing what I was looking for or what kinds of questions would help bring it out, I decided to let the field speak for itself. I did this by immersing myself as much as possible in each community, and building relationships with the residents to develop my understanding of the social and material realities of their everyday environments and the types of issues and attitudes that governed their daily activities. Adopting somewhat of a phenomenological approach guided by the belief that ‘truth and understanding of life can emerge from people’s life experiences’ (Byrne, 2001: 830), I employed different qualitative methods with the intention of illuminating the more subtle phenomena at play within and across these communities, and the meanings and perspectives ascribed to them by residents (Lester, 1999: 1).

### ***3.4.2 Participant observation***

Participant observation, an ethnographic method that ‘seeks to uncover, make accessible, and reveal the meanings (realities) people use to make sense out of their daily lives’ (Jorgensen, 1989: 16) whereby the researcher both observes and participates in ‘everyday life situations’ (ibid.:17), was practiced throughout the duration of my fieldwork, although most acutely in the earlier stages of my research. For the first month of my fourth visit to Cebu, from as early as seven or eight in the morning until dusk (and sometimes well into the evenings), I moved between my study sites, attending homeowner association meetings and community events, learning to cook Philippine delicacies, playing *tongits* (a local card game), singing videoke, accompanying residents on visits to neighbours, trips to the market

or to mango groves in the nearby hills where, in the absence of middle men, a kilo of delicious mangos could be purchased for as little as 60 pesos (equivalent to USD 1.20); and of course, singing more *videoke*, the favourite of Filipino pastimes.

Having to distribute my presence between five different communities, and equally mindful of not wanting to burden or overstay my welcome with my incredibly generous hosts, I tried to visit two communities daily, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, repeating this for the better part of 13 consecutive weeks (and again in my final three week visit). During the first month in particular, the majority of my time was spent with the presidents and other officers of the homeowner associations. Over the course of these regular encounters, my network broadened as I established myself as a familiar face in each area and slowly built a level of trust and rapport with others in the community. Evidence collected during this period took the form of field notes and reflection logs written up in the evenings, photographs, and the occasional audio recording of informal conversations or community meeting proceedings, which were translated *in situ* by my interpreter, Regina.

More than any information ‘gathered’ so-to-speak, this time was invaluable for the relationships that developed and mutual understanding that ensued with the women and men who shared so much of their time with me. Perhaps as a consequence of my entry point into these communities being through the homeowner associations, and the many hours spent with individuals who were actively involved in, if not leading, these organisations, I found myself learning a great deal about the day-to-day labours and intricate socio-political dynamics within these associations. It is these insights that came to reshape the direction of my study from its original focus on events conventionally conceived of as ‘disasters’ towards the ‘everyday risks and disasters’ afflicting residents, and more specifically, developing my understanding of the function of homeowner associations in informal settlements and the gender dynamics of participation within these grassroots institutions.

### ***3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews***

As I personally observed in the preliminary focus groups, interactive forums frequently result in some individuals being more or less vocal than others. They are also not an appropriate means of sourcing detailed accounts of individual histories and experiences. Given my interest in people’s personal stories and circumstances including their perceptions of risk and individual motivations and experiences of participating in community organising, one-to-one interviews seemed a fitting way of engaging respondents in deeper discursive reflection. Not wanting to limit conversations to a fixed set of parameters or unduly influence the nature of the discussions, but equally mindful of the

need to maintain some focus on my research interests, a semi-structured interview model was assumed to ensure a degree of uniformity across the individual discussions, while also leaving space for conversation to flow naturally and for diversion as interesting and unexpected points emerged (Gaskell, 2000: 45).

Face-to face, semi-structured interviews have long been associated with feminist methods as a key means through which individual testimonies and access to women's hidden knowledge can be solicited (Reinharz, 1992). To the extent that '[a]gency is claimed through constructions of the self' (Van Staple, 2014: 15), by giving voice and discursive space to individual narratives, a semi-structured or unstructured interview can both complement and embody many of the ideals associated with a feminist perspective, and consequently has become somewhat of an orthodoxy in feminist methodological frameworks. However as cautioned by many, interviews in themselves are not an inherently feminist mode of inquiry, but depend entirely on the manner in which they are employed and conducted (Kelly et al., 1994; 1992; Maynard, 1994).

#### ***3.4.4 Participatory research through photography***

Keen to encourage meaningful participation, while also mindful of how linguistic barriers and literacy levels might hinder respondents' confidence and ability to articulate themselves verbally (Antona, 2018; Dodman, 2003; van-Blerk, 2006), I decided to incorporate a photography activity into my research. As with other visual methods, photography offers a medium of expression and research technique that can help to circumvent many of the pitfalls and social inequalities perpetuated through methods that depend entirely on verbal communication (Dodman, 2003: 294). In addition to giving me insights into places, activities and interactions that I might not otherwise access (Young and Barrett, 2001), I wanted to give respondents the freedom to define the scope of our discussions, with the option of utilising a non-verbal medium to help them share their stories and ideas (Holms, 2014; Leavy, 2015: 232). I also felt that given the political and often material quality of risk manifestations, photographs served as visual evidence of respondents' testimonies and day-to-day realities (Dodman, 2003; van-Blerk, 2006; Young and Barrett, 2001), and therein could be used to bolster their advocacy work and stimulate dialogue and greater awareness, both within their respective organisations and among policy makers and other external actors.

In researching different photographic methodologies, I was particularly inspired by a method developed by Caroline Wang et al. (1997; 2000; 1998; see also Wang, 1999) known as 'photovoice'. Photovoice entails 'a participatory means of sharing expertise and

knowledge' that carries three particular objectives: '(1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers' (Wang and Burris, 1997: 369–70). Of particular appeal to me was the action research element of this creative and flexible method, and the complementarity of its explicit principles with the practical and political objectives of feminist epistemologies. As described by McIntyre (2003: 48), who used photovoice to explore the relationship between place and identity in Northern Ireland, the cameras enable women (and men) 'to tell "visual stories" about themselves, thus creating opportunities for them to express themselves in their own images, words, and reflections', noting how in her study, 'these images became points of entry into seeing beneath surface issues, relationships, community events, and the extent to which place informs identity.'

Participatory action research using creative methods can help to facilitate an expression of personal narratives and voices that may be subsumed by traditional methods (Akerkar, 2001; Bell and Paola, 2001; Shpungin et al., 2012). Reflecting on his use of participatory diagramming, Kesby (2000: 432) contends that not only do these methods 'generate rich, nuanced data... but, if deployed through an action research epistemology, it can also open spaces in which researchers can facilitate participants' own reflection and action in the fieldwork arena itself.' Although I would not classify my methods as 'action research' per se, I have sought to integrate collaborative and action-oriented principles into my interactions with respondents and methods of triangulation, viewing participants as critical in the production of knowledge. Photovoice has numerous advantages as a participatory research tool, in that it allows researchers to 'perceive the world from the viewpoint of the people who lead different lives than those traditionally in control of the means for imaging the world' (Wang and Burris, 1997: 372) through a relatively accessible means, whose materiality helps to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers that may lead to distorted interpretations of people's stories. Furthermore, the use of photographs as a discussion aid can be especially useful when the topics being discussed 'involve deeply rooted values or feelings that respondents have difficulty identifying or articulating' (Stewart et al., 2007: 92). In exploring issues of risk, politics, power, and social identity, these features of photovoice make it an especially attractive method for encouraging storytelling and personal reflection, with the possibility of extending this dialogue to the community at large. That said, photographic methods also come with limitations and do not necessarily circumvent issues of power in the research process. Respondents might take pictures of what they imagine the researcher wants to see or talk about, negating to some

extent the 'empowering' feature of autophotography, and as with interviews, care needs to be taken in how conversations about the photographs are facilitated.

Several weeks into the above described period of intensive participant observation, when I felt that a degree of mutual trust and understanding had been established, I proposed the possibility of incorporating a photography activity into the research to my key contacts in all five study sites, to gauge whether they felt this was a good idea and something that might appeal to them and their members. The suggestion was received positively, so, on the back of their encouragement, I asked the presidents of each homeowner association to arrange a meeting with any members who were interested in getting an update on my research. At each of these meetings, for the benefit of individuals who had not participated in the preliminary focus groups, I reintroduced myself, explaining my connection (and independence) from FORGE and the broad focus of my research on gender and risk, emphasising my desire to better understand the lived realities and day-to-day experiences of women and men living in informal settlements. After sharing some stories from my fieldwork to date, I discussed my hopes for the next few months in the field and proposed the idea of a photography activity as an alternative to traditional interviews, asking if anyone would be interested in taking part.

I explained that participants would be given a digital camera for approximately one week and asked to take pictures of anything they wanted, with the intention that at the end of this period, they would choose five pictures and use these photographs to tell me a story about themselves or their community. Interest in the photography activity varied between study sites, however in each area, several individuals vocalised their willingness to participate in the research, some using the cameras, and others opting for a more conventional face-to-face interview (see Table 3.2 for a summary of the one-to-one interviews conducted in each settlement). Those interested in the photography were invited to stay for a short workshop where we reviewed the mechanics of using the cameras<sup>26</sup>, and following the guidance offered by other scholars who have used photovoice in their research (Wang, 2003; Wang and Burris, 1997; Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001), discussed ethics of taking pictures of others, the importance of informed consent, ways to stay safe and protect themselves from harm, and the power of documentary photography, both as a

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<sup>26</sup> Some participants had difficulty operating the cameras, resulting in blurry photographs, some of which are included in subsequent chapters.

means of self-expression and symbolic representation, and in terms of the political value of the material evidence produced.

*Table 3.2: One-to-one interviews conducted with informal settlers by gender and barangay*

FIELD SITES	PHOTO INTERVIEWS		REGULAR INTERVIEWS		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
Laguerta, Busay, Cebu City	2	6	3	5	16
Alaska, Mambaling, Cebu City	2	1	2	0	5
Lower Mahiga, Banilad, Cebu City	1	5	0	0	6
Zone 3, Mantuyong, Mandaue City	2	5	0	0	7
Aroma, Subangdako, Mantuyong, Mandaue City	3	7	0	0	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>44</b>

In total, 44 informal settlers participated in one-to-one interviews (66 percent of whom were female). Of these 44 people, 22 (50 percent) had also participated in the preliminary focus group discussions. The majority of respondents in both the focus groups and one-to-one interviews were currently serving as officers in their respective associations or had done previously, and all considered themselves to be active members, reflected to some extent by their willingness to participate in the research, but also by their regular payment of association fees and meeting attendance. The average age of interview respondents was 44 (the oldest participant aged 72 and youngest aged 19), and the average household size was five, with respondents for the most part, living with their partners and children who were either enrolled in education or working. Although 44 people were interviewed in total, I came to know and spend much of my time with key individuals in each community, namely the presidents of the associations. These leaders, many of whom had a basic level of fluency in English (due to their having completed highschool if not

college), participated in several interviews over the duration of my fieldwork<sup>27</sup>, providing me with important details about the histories of the associations and their ongoing negotiations and advocacy initiatives. Conversely, one-off respondent interviews focused more specifically on their life stories, personal circumstances and motivations for engaging in their association. Consequently, in the chapters that follow, the voices and stories of some characters appear more frequently than others. This is partially because of their authority and depth of knowledge on community affairs, but also because the relationships that we developed over time meant that our conversations veered into more personal territory, providing me with rich insights into the complex yet subtle dynamics I sought to understand operating across the scales of the individual, household and community.

Given my resolve to let the field and research participants 'speak for themselves' as much as possible, I intentionally left the brief quite open, as I was keen to see what kinds of things they would choose to share with me, believing that this process in itself would be valuable in highlighting issues or themes that might otherwise remain invisible through a more direct line of questioning. Arranging the interviews in this manner gave the conversations (conducted in Cebuano with the help of my interpreter) a more natural feel and flow, as respondents reminisced and shared stories about different events and experiences. I did ask questions, but attempted to frame these to follow on from things people mentioned first. For analytical purposes, I also tried to ensure a degree of uniformity across the interviews by asking all participants questions about their backgrounds (i.e. how long they had been living in their settlement, when and where they had moved there from, why they migrated, who lived with them, their education and/or livelihoods etc.), about their membership and participation in the homeowner associations (when and why they joined the association and their engagement in *bayanihan*), about risks or difficulties in their communities, and about their hopes and plans for the future.

This structure and line of questioning served to encourage life history narratives, which as discussed by Anderson et al. (1987) can help illuminate the feelings, emotions, and meanings associated with particular experiences and behaviours as identified by the respondents themselves. Recognising the influence of social and political constraints on the actions and behaviours of marginalised people, the authors contend that one must attempt to study consciousness, the 'sphere of greatest freedom' for these individuals, and 'go behind the veil of outwardly conforming activity to understand what particular behaviour

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<sup>27</sup> These additional interviews have not been included in Table 3.2 so as not to misrepresent the number of respondents in each area.

means to her [them], and reciprocally to understand how her [their] behaviour affects her [their] consciousness and activity' (ibid.: 107). The choice of questions were also partially influenced by Buitelaar's (2014: 30) supposition that 'the articulation of past, present and future plans and the creation of meaningful links between achievements and disappointments demand and stimulate self-reflection and self-regulation, thus contributing to agency.' Following this line of thought, the process of orally recounting one's history and life experiences had the potential to facilitate the aforementioned aspiration of inspiring personal and political transformation traditionally associated with feminist methodologies.

On average, each interview lasted between one and two hours, and where possible and appropriate, were held in respondents' homes (or in a place of their choosing), which in addition to helping them feel at ease, also offered me insights into the physical and material conditions of their living arrangements. As with the focus groups, before each face-to-face interview, I reiterated the purpose of my research, stressing my autonomy from FORGE and from any other organisation in Cebu and in the UK, and reminded them that the decision to participate in this research was entirely their own choice, and that they could withdraw their interview or cease participation at any point. It was important to me that respondents understood that I was not affiliated with an NGO or donor organisation, and that they were under no obligation from FORGE or their association to take part in the study. I also explained that the information they shared with me would be confidentially recorded and anonymised unless otherwise agreed, and that a copy of my thesis would be shared with the participating homeowner associations, with FORGE and with relevant public institutions.

Given the spatial and material features often associated with risk, several field discussions also took the form of 'walking interviews' as I was taken to specific places or parts of the community which were relevant to our discussion. Walking interviews combine the benefits of interviews with participant observation, which 'because of its ability to examine a participant's interpretations of their contexts while experiencing these contexts... offers a number of potential benefits for studying how place may matter' (Carpiano, 2009: 265). However, as Evans and Jones (2011: 856) conclude, 'walking interviews tend to be longer and more spatially focussed, engaging to a greater extent with features in the area under study than with the autobiographical narrative of interviewees.' As such, walking interviews, were never conducted in place of, but rather as an appendage to the semi-structured face-to-face interviews (in situ), to offer additional context to

respondents' descriptions of physical and spatial manifestations of risk in their communities.

### ***3.4.5 Collective reflection, triangulation and respondent feedback***

In November 2017, I returned to Cebu for three weeks as a follow-up field visit. During this time, I met with key respondents to get an update on events of significance that had taken place in their community in the year I had been away. My primary objective in planning this trip was, however, to share my findings with FORGE and the individuals who participated in the study, giving them the opportunity to reflect and comment on my analysis of the themes that emerged from their testimonies, and on the socio-political implications of these findings for their ongoing community organising efforts. Not only did I feel this would enable me to triangulate my findings, but drawing inspiration from Freire's (1970, 1973) notion of 'critical consciousness', I sought to create a space for respondents to collectively consider the forces that influence people's lives, and to develop strategies to overcome the political, social and economic constraints that they face, with the wider objective of facilitating meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange that might improve the efficacy of their organisations and inspire wider social transformation.

For this culminating activity, I collated a list of all the homeowner association members who had participated in the study, including all focus group and interview respondents, as well as those I had come to know over the course of my time spent in the communities and who had a degree of engagement in my research. With the help of FORGE staff and the respective homeowner association officials, these individuals (and any others who voiced an interest) were invited to attend this half day feedback activity, at a beachside venue in Lapu-Lapu that FORGE often used for offsite training and 'bonding' activities and was thus familiar to many of them. Transportation costs for each attendee were calculated and the funds distributed in advance of the session to ensure that participants were able to join, and drinks, snacks and a hot lunch were provided as well. A total of 35 people attended, including FORGE's chief executive and three staff members from the COD, and 31 community members from across the five study sites. Several of the participants from different homeowner associations were very well acquainted with one another, having met on numerous occasions in various training sessions and meetings organised by FORGE, and thus were comfortable with, and accustomed to, cross-associational dialogue and activities.

As mentioned, I wanted to use this opportunity not only to present my findings, but more crucially to solicit feedback as to whether they felt I had accurately captured and interpreted their testimonies, and as to whether they felt my analysis of their circumstances

and perceptions had validity and relevance (or not). Mindful of how best to elicit an honest and meaningful conversation, after beginning with a brief (re)introduction about my research interests and methodology, I proceeded by presenting (first in English, then again in Cebuano with the help of my interpreter Regina) a finding/observation (e.g. women and men participate differently in homeowner associations) and asking community members to discuss in small groups (arranged by area) first, whether they felt this was an accurate observation (or not) by giving examples (e.g. of the different and/or similar activities of men and women in their homeowner association, see Figure 3.12) and second, to think about and offer an explanation as to their observations (e.g. why is this the case). Each group was given around 15 minutes to do this and then presented their experiences and perspectives back to the whole group (first in Cebuano and then translated into English) (see Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.12: Reflecting on gendered participation

ACTIVITIES:	LALAKI	BABAE
A. ALERT/ DISASTER		
1. FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE / FRONTLINE	✓	
2. CROWD CONTROL	✓	✓
3. MEDICS/ FIRST AID	✓	✓
4. MONTHLY MEETINGS (MOAG)	✓	✓
5. MASS MOBILIZATION (PROTEST, RALLY, LOBBY, SHOW UP/ SUPPORT)	✓	✓
6. WCC / PDC	✓	✓
7. SEMINARS / TRAINING	✓	✓

Source: Author's photograph, 2017.

Figure 3.13 Culminating feedback activity with community respondents



Source: Author's photographs, 2017.

After soliciting their respective insights and discussing similarities and differences, I then offered my analysis on the particular finding and asked them to reflect and discuss this among themselves, followed by a collective discussion across the groups. This format was deployed sequentially for each of my key findings, broadly pertaining to the themes of

gendered participation in homeowner associations, risks and insecurity in informal settlements, and the impact and effectiveness of community organising initiatives, considering the individual and collective costs and benefits associated with this work, and the extent to which it is facilitating (or not) positive changes at the individual and/or collective scale. To conclude, participants were asked to reflect on the relevance or application (if any) of these findings and my research more broadly to their respective homeowner associations, resulting in a number of clear actions and ideas for further development. By structuring the session in this manner, Regina would relay respondents' thoughts and analysis to me, before presenting back my own, opening up a space for critical dialogue around differences that emerged in our interpretations and why, and therein facilitating a valuable process of personal and collective reflection for all of us.

As a way of saying thank you and giving back to FORGE and the research participants, I also printed off a collection of photographs taken by the respondents themselves, alongside relevant testimonies, and had these mounted professionally so that they could be exhibited by FORGE at their upcoming 30 year anniversary in December 2017. In addition to raising awareness about FORGE's work with informal settlements around the city, the photo exhibition is a means of making my research (and most importantly the voices of respondents) accessible to a wider audience, including other urban poor organisations, municipal government agencies and international donors. This photographic evidence serves as 'a catalogue of social issues' (McIntyre, 2003: 48) and perspectives that can be used to promote ongoing critical reflection among FORGE's partner organisations and stimulate community action, with the added possibility of helping to inform and influence social policy to address local concerns and priorities (ibid.; see also Blackman and Fairey, 2007; Wang and Burris, 1997: 373; Wang et al., 1998). While I was unable to mount the photographs on the walls of the venue for the final group activity, I had them displayed on the tables for respondents to see throughout the session (see Figure 3.14).

*Figure 3.14 Feedback session participants perusing the photographs produced through the research*



Source: Author's photographs, 2017.

Both FORGE staff and the attendees from the communities relayed that they found this feedback session to be valuable and eye-opening in terms of my findings, as well as in the dialogue that in many ways amounted to a community-led needs assessment and action planning process (Wang and Burris, 1997: 380). Shortly after this event, FORGE's chief executive presented my research findings to the wider management team and they have since been integrating some changes to their gender policy and approach to gender mainstreaming in community organising. As has been the intention from the outset of this study, it is hoped that that the combined oral and visual evidence produced from this research will continue to be used by FORGE and their partner homeowner associations to support their advocacy initiatives and encourage wider public debate and awareness about the everyday realities of risk and resilience for informal settlers living in Metro Cebu.

### ***3.4.6 Civil society and local government***

While the perspectives and experiences of the urban poor have been my main focus throughout this research, in order to better understand the wider socio-political landscapes they are required to navigate and the multiple spheres of interaction between their communities and other institutional actors, sourcing the views of key stakeholders outside

the communities was equally crucial for me to appreciate the bigger political picture. Informed by desk-based research and in-field conversations, I made contact with relevant governmental departments working on social development, DRRM and land tenure issues in informal settlements. This included the local and provincial DRRM offices, the Department for the Welfare of the Urban Poor (DWUP) in Cebu City and its Mandaue City affiliate the Housing and Urban Development Office (HUDO), the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP), as well as barangay captains and city councillors. In addition to formally interviewing key informants within these institutions, some of them on several occasions, I was frequently invited to accompany staff on site visits and to attend various internal events, enabling me to get a better sense of their day-to-day remit and operations. I also regularly met with community organisers working in FORGE's COD, and organised a formal interview with their chief executive, as well as a couple of other civil society organisations working on urban poor issues in the city. The total number of formal one-to-one interviews conducted with key informants across these different organisations is summarised in Table 3.3 below.

*Table 3.3: Interviews conducted with key informants in local government and civil society organisations during main period of fieldwork*

INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS FORMALLY INTERVIEWED
Governmental departments and barangay officials	13
Civil Society	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>

The dynamics of these 'expert' interviews differed somewhat from those conducted with informal settlers, and also produced a different type of data, in the sense that the details shared were generally more impersonal. Following a more traditional semi-structured interview format, although I asked questions about their backgrounds and the motivations or circumstances that led them to their current sector, our conversations quickly reverted back to the details of their work and/or related expertise. Where the autophotography placed respondents in the driving seat of the discussion and offered them a visual medium for communicating intimate details about their lives, interviews with government

employees and civil society typically stayed within more 'official' work-related terrain, obscuring their individual subjectivities to some extent. The information they chose to share with me was perhaps influenced by what they perceived my objectives were in asking them for an interview, as well as by (their) time constraints which generated a more direct and less fluid discussion. Nonetheless, these interviews were important in helping me contextualise urban poor narratives within the broader political dynamics operating in Metro Cebu.

### ***3.5 Data analysis***

While the conditions and circumstances of each community are unique in many respects, the testimonies of the women and men elicited through the interviews and focus group discussions have for the most part been analysed holistically with the intention of providing a general account of risk, resilience and community organising among informal settlers across the metro area. By this, I mean that I have not approached the communities as individual case studies, but rather have examined the similarities in gendered narratives across each area, while also unpacking and offering space to the specificities in their circumstances that differentiate their stories and experiences. My objective here is not so much to make generalisations or claims of representation, but rather to give weight to the often ignored voices and realities of the urban poor while also appraising the influence of wider social and political structures on manifestations and management of risk and precarity in informal settlements. Furthermore, although the culminating activity brought respondents together to encourage dialogue and collective reflection on the accuracy and relevance of my findings, in contrast to conventional photovoice methods where themes emerging from the photographs would be identified and analysed collectively by participants, the analysis of respondent testimonies detailed in subsequent chapters are based on my interpretations alone. Relatedly, while my methods produced a mix of oral and visual data, as mentioned above, my motivations for using autophotography were to facilitate a more natural flow of conversation during the interviews and to provide respondents with an alternative means of expressing themselves. As such, my analysis did not incorporate the images produced, but focused instead on the topics and issues that emerged during the interviews. Interview discussions were transcribed and then coded using NVIVO software, which provided me with a useful platform for organising the extensive testimonies collected. NVIVO also enabled me to clearly identify the key themes in respondent narratives, as well as the parallels and differences between different groups.

### ***3.6 Ethics and reflexivity***

As a young Canadian woman of mixed-ethnic heritage, completing my PhD in the UK, I have reflected at length on how my intersecting identities have positioned me in the field and continue to influence how I perceive and interpret the world around me, as well as how interview respondents relate to me and the type of information they have chosen to share with me (Ferreyra, 2006; Harley et al., 2002; Hopkins, 2007). My analysis of what constitutes a 'gender issue' is informed by a feminist lens that sees social relationships and institutional structures as mutually re-enacting and producing gendered norms and hierarchies; a belief rooted in Eurocentric epistemologies (Mohanty, 1988) that have come to shape my thinking over the course of my personal and academic life, and which reflect my relative position of economic (and other) privilege that has allowed me to study and travel.

Conducting research in the Philippines as a non-Filipino, English speaking woman has had both advantages and limitations in terms of relationship building, trust and communication. In my experience, women (and sometimes men) may feel more comfortable speaking with other women (rather than men) about gender-related issues, so long as they do not view the researcher as a threat. Both men and women may also be more open to speaking about sensitive or taboo topics to an outsider they trust is less likely to judge or stigmatise them, though depending on the context and subject of discussion, the opposite may also be true. Perhaps partially as a consequence of my positionality, I believe that the trust and relationships that developed with respondents throughout my fieldwork are to some extent reflected in the intimate and honest nature of the stories and insights they shared with me, as well as in their continued Facebook correspondence with me when I am in the UK, and their willingness to participate in research activities throughout the duration of my fieldwork. It was also common knowledge that my female partner and (at the time) four month old daughter had accompanied me to Cebu for my main period of fieldwork. Though they did not join me on community visits, a handful of the women that I became closest to were able to meet them, sharing photographs and stories with others in the community, and in so doing, perhaps making me slightly less of a stranger. My general openness with respondents about my family, including my sexual orientation, and my willingness to share aspects of my private life with them helped to establish these feelings of trust and also appeared to make respondents feel more comfortable discussing certain 'taboo' subjects with me, including but not limited to sex and sexuality.

This said, to the extent that my outsider status may have contributed to the honest and open dialogue and relationships that were established with the majority of respondents, there were a small number of cases where the opposite was true. In a couple of the interviews, although respondents knew that I was an independent researcher, many asked me if I could help them financially, or knew anyone who could. At the end of one interview, the respondent asked me what he could expect in return for his time. Despite my best efforts at transparency, his question suggested he had participated in the photo interview without really understanding who I was and why I was there, though it was unclear to me whether this was because he had been misled by others in the community or simply didn't listen to or understand what was being said in the meeting where I solicited interview participants. For many of the informal settlers I came to know, their only contact with Westerners had been through INGOs or charitable organisations affiliated with the church or FORGE that were funding development programmes in their communities. As such, it was not surprising that upon sharing the many difficulties and challenges facing them and their families, they hoped my empathy might encourage me to give or do something more than write about their situations. None the less (and perhaps magnified by the many years I spent working in NGOs prior to starting my PhD), my inability to offer nothing more than the promise of writing about their situations was difficult for me, and led me to question whether I could have done more to manage expectations.

There were also two interviews where respondents didn't seem engaged in the process and where their short responses and closed body language suggested to me that they were uncomfortable being interviewed, and perhaps had agreed to participate under duress, whether from actual or perceived pressure from fellow community members. In these situations, when my attempts to encourage elaboration or clarification did not seem to aid the discussion, I thanked them for their time and brought the interviews to a close, sharing my remaining fieldwork plans and timeline for writing up, and reiterating again that they could choose to withdraw their comments and participation at any point in this process. These experiences, though limited in number, reinforce the importance of continuously considering one's positionality in the field, reflecting on how it shapes the way people see you and interact with you, and the information they choose to share. Furthermore, my lack of fluency in Cebuano and dependence on an interpreter excluded me from eavesdropping on conversations taking place around me, and likely contributed to a more staged or formal dynamic of interaction than might otherwise have been the case.

As a female researcher whose subjects included men, there was also an added level of complexity, particularly as gender is frequently construed in popular imaginations as

being about women's oppression by men, which has the potential to ignite feelings of defensiveness and resentment among male respondents. Applying learning from my professional background in gender mainstreaming, I made a point of emphasising my interest in the experiences of both men and women as they are affected by socially defined roles and expectations pertaining to masculinity and femininity. Perhaps as a consequence of this, and the fact that many of the communities I was working with had undergone gender sensitivity training by FORGE, the majority of the men and women I met with seemed to understand my research objectives and motives in this regard, thereby eliminating feelings of defensiveness associated with gender politics that may otherwise have emerged.

In addition to the above-discussed ethical considerations pertaining to my positionality and the research process, given that the subject matter in this study concerned personal experiences of loss and catastrophe, I was sensitive to the fact that discussions may stir up traumatic memories and difficult emotions for participants (Flick, 2007). I made a point of actively observing people's body language and expressions, noting silences as well as the content and delivery of verbal responses. When participants became visibly upset or emotional, I gave them time and space, asking them if they were OK, and telling them we didn't need to speak about this anymore or continue with the interview. However my concern was overwhelmingly met with their desire to go on, and when I asked for feedback about the interview process (and photography activity where relevant), which I did after each and every interview, many respondents thanked me for listening to their stories and for offering them an opportunity to revisit their memories and reflect on their life experiences, which, though difficult at times, they were happy to have shared with someone, suggesting this process was therapeutic for them.

In employing various methods of data collection in an inductive manner, I have tried to give respondents the space and flexibility to express themselves and communicate their ideas and stories through various mediums, with the intention of capturing the complexities inherent to how different individuals makes sense of their own experiences (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2218). I have made a conscious effort to actively include respondents in the research process; updating them regularly on my findings and observations during my time in the field, and giving them the chance to reflect and comment on the accuracy and relevance of my analysis from their perspectives. Notwithstanding the inherent contestability (and temporality) of qualitative claim-making (Cho and Trent, 2006: 322; Porter, 2016: 301; Seale, 1999), this means of triangulating, known as 'member checking', has been a useful way for me to 'validate' the findings of my study (ibid.; see also Caretta, 2016). That said, I recognise that the data I am gathering is inherently subjective and am

not attempting to aggregate these different 'truths', but rather, am approaching this from the stance that 'differences generated from different research techniques are likely to be as illuminating as the similarities' (Maynard and Purvis, 1994: 4). Furthermore, I recognise that the procedures employed to facilitate meaningful participation and dialogue did not completely erase asymmetries of power and privilege from the researcher-respondent relationship (Caretta and Riaño, 2016: 260). The methods, questions and agenda of this study were 'co-produced' as well as being defined by my personal and political interests. Furthermore while respondents have actively contributed to the findings and (to a lesser extent) analysis of this research, the power of representation in terms of how the knowledges gathered are presented has remained in my control through the writing up process (ibid.).

### ***3.7 Conclusion: reflecting on limitations***

Given that access to the communities and local knowledge in this research was almost entirely dependent on the cooperation and support of FORGE and the presidents of the homeowner associations, researcher-gatekeeper power dynamics warrant reflection on how these may have influenced the research process (Lund et al., 2016). My introduction to these communities through FORGE, an organisation that has a positive and credible reputation, served to legitimise my research to some degree, while also helping me to establish a level of trust with participants more quickly. However as previously discussed, it may also have influenced the nature and dynamics of participant engagement, including the type of information they chose to share with me, and in some cases, expectations of reaping personal (financial or other) benefits. My sampling approach also introduces several potential biases into my research findings that are worth noting. First, it is likely that many of the individuals who participated in the study consider DRRM, community development issues, and gender (to some extent) as important matters, given their interest in my research, and their (mostly) active membership in homeowner associations. Aside from the few cases that indicated possible feelings of coercion, the fact that they volunteered to be interviewed also suggests that respondents wanted to tell me something or share something with me and therein had their own motivations for participating in the research. These motivations are likely shaped by the values and politics that they identify with FORGE and their homeowner association.

It is also important to highlight that the respondent group did not for the most part include the voices of those individuals who are potentially most marginalised in the community including children, people with physical and/or learning disabilities, as well as

renters, new migrants, drug addicts and sex workers who were depicted negatively by many participants. As a result of the stigma attached to these demographics, one can assume that they are likely to be ostracised and excluded from local avenues of support (which may include community organisations) thereby exacerbating their vulnerability in several respects. By using FORGE and the homeowner associations as my entry points into the communities, I was tapping into a pre-established (and in many cases longstanding) network of peers and neighbours who share a common interest and can turn to one another in times of need. Also missing from the sample group are the voices of street homeless and others who may be classified as the 'poorest of the poor', and those individuals who decided not to join a homeowner association.

Lastly, and connected with the previous point, I feel it is important to acknowledge the politics of community organising in Metro Cebu and highlight the key limitations of this study. Among the formally recognised institutions active in community organising among the urban poor, there are broadly three main factions that I came to know of operating in Metro Cebu. Some community organising in informal settlements is orchestrated via national and municipal government departments such as PCUP, DWUP and HUDO, usually when communities in question are facing demolition and eviction. Then there are NGOs such as FORGE, who work in partnership with the government and communities on a broad range of urban poor issues from land tenure insecurity and site development through to DRRM. And finally, there are groups that adopt a more 'militant' approach to lobbying for change, including local branches of KADAMAY (*Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap* loosely translating as the 'Federation of Mutual Aid for the Poor, or 'compatriot'), a national alliance of urban poor organisations fighting against the demolition of informal settlements around the country, and Anakpawis (translating to 'offspring of the labouring class'), the electoral party representing marginalised sectors (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6).

Based on my own observations, there appears to be little trust, unity and/or collaboration among these factions at the grassroots, despite their shared status (at the community level) as urban poor informal settlers and common interest in issues of land tenure insecurity. In fact, at some points, I got a sense that there may even be a degree of animosity or competition between these groups, associated with their real or perceived political affiliations and operating principles, or other things that remain outside my purview. These political divisions, which I reflect on in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7, are important to acknowledge given the frequency with which 'community' is idealised and taken to reflect a united entity, and similar tendencies to homogenise the urban poor and their interests. Most interesting to me however, was how government officials spoke about

this third faction of community-based organisations, portraying their leaders as liars and trouble-makers, who were aggressive, uncompromising, and misleading their members around their rights to land tenure security, ultimately implying that they were doing more harm than good for their members. While I was aware of the existence of this more ‘militant’ wing of community organising in the city, it was only during my final field visit that I was able to uncover more details about who they were and connect with individuals affiliated with them.

In any case, owing to my association with FORGE in the communities I was working in, any attempts to reach out to other associations in the community operating under a different political faction may have been met with suspicion, and may also have impaired the relationships established with FORGE’s partner organisations. In this light, although my entry into these communities through FORGE was valuable in many respects, it should be noted that my findings are limited to a small sample of residents within the realm of community organising through NGOs such as FORGE that work in partnership with the government.<sup>28</sup> My ethnographic findings should thus not be taken to reflect the realities or perspectives of all individuals involved in community organising activities in my study sites, as even within these relatively small geographic areas, there may be several distinct member organisations in operation.

The feminist methods and political ecology conceptual framework (see Chapter 2) underpinning this research have been adopted because of their appropriateness for critically exploring gendered politics and experiences of risk in informal settlements. In working across five geographically, environmentally and politically diverse study sites, and sourcing perspectives from women and men involved in homeowner associations as well as those working for the government and civil society, the findings from this research, while in many ways particular to these communities, showcase some of the broader socio-political and gendered dynamics driving the production of and responses to risk in urban poor communities. The combined photographic and oral testimonies produced through this study also offer unique insights into the day-to-day experiences and priorities of individuals living in informal settlements classified as ‘danger zones’ or ‘disaster prone’, and the meanings they ascribe to their encounters with risk and efforts to mitigate their circumstances of insecurity. The next three chapters present the findings of this research,

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<sup>28</sup> FORGE and Pagtambayayong, another urban poor organisation that is distinct from but work collaboratively with FORGE, are the two largest organisations of this nature operating in Metro Cebu,

beginning with an examination of how issues of risk, insecurity and disaster are framed and understood by urban poor informal settlers.

## **4 The ‘everyday’ versus the ‘exceptional’: analysing risk from the perspectives of informal settlers**

This chapter contextualises the realities of risk and insecurity affecting urban poor residents in Metro Cebu and examines the social, political and environmental factors that contribute to their vulnerability. Drawing on respondent testimonies and personal field observations to showcase this risk landscape as seen from the perspectives of informal settlers living in communities that are considered ‘danger zones’ or ‘disaster prone’, I adopt a feminist political ecology lens to analyse the ways in which gender subjectivities, ideologies and identities (Elmhirst, 2011: 130) feature within their everyday encounters with, and interpretations of risk. Focusing on the concerns and priorities identified by residents themselves reveals a nuanced picture of risk in informal settlements; gendered knowledges that I contend warrant greater attention, yet are typically neglected in conventional (disaster) risk and urban development policies and programmes. As depicted in the narratives of respondents, it is not the large scale events classified as disasters that dominate the minds of the urban poor, but the daily challenges of survival under conditions of incessant financial, livelihood and land tenure insecurity that preoccupy them most. Echoing the assertion by Zeiderman (2016: 82) that ‘it is the entanglement of diverse dangers that ultimately matters [most] to “at risk” populations’, I reveal how these ‘hybrid threats’ (ibid.) interact with multiple and often gendered capital deficiencies, reinforcing one another to the detriment of the urban poor. Specifically, I show how everyday risks associated with livelihood insecurity are intimately tied to the threat and experience of demolition, eviction and environmental risks, with the latter also reinforcing the former to produce what Allen et al. (2015) term ‘urban risk traps’.

The chapter begins with an ethnographic vignette that highlights these complex, hybrid and cyclical forms of urban risk, contextualising respondents’ current circumstances within broader histories of disadvantage and enduring insecurity. The detailed description offered in this section is useful in introducing the reader to a number of interrelated themes and issues that my thesis seeks to address pertaining to poverty, urban development, (disaster) risk, and displacement. Drawing on the life story narratives of interview and focus group respondents, I analyse the relationship between gendered educational attainment and livelihood opportunities, and how these in turn affect people’s access to housing, land tenure security, and exposure to health hazards including interpersonal violence, each of which constitute important components of risk and vulnerability among the urban poor of Metro Cebu. Across these thematic discussions, I consider how women and men make sense of their riskscapes, reflecting on gendered subjectivities as they interact with other forms

of social difference to define shared and distinct socio-spatial realities. I argue that although both women and men are affected by the aforementioned issues, the imagined and material articulations and embodiments of these insecurities are perhaps felt most acutely by women, because of gendered structures of constraint.

Premised around the extent to which ‘everyday’ material, social and political disadvantage dominate respondents’ accounts of risk and disaster, I also argue that the tendency for community-based DRRM narratives, policies and interventions to focus solely on large catastrophic events obscures the realities of informal settlers living in ‘danger zones’. Moreover, I contend that the language of ‘disasters’ being endorsed and propagated by both local and national governments in the Philippines depoliticises discussions of risk by deflecting attention away from everyday vulnerability born from circumstances of poverty, discrimination and political neglect, while also critically obscuring the ways in which the Philippine state is directly implicated in (and benefits from - see Chapter 5) these processes. This line of discussion sets the tone for the subsequent chapters, which analyse the political economy of (disaster) risk in Metro Cebu (Chapter 5) and gendered participation in homeowner associations (Chapter 6); institutions which I argue, serve multiple risk management functions in informal settlements.

#### ***4.1 Everyday risk and insecurity in informal settlements: Jerry’s story***

I have chosen to open this section with excerpts from my 2016 photovoice interview<sup>29</sup> with Jerry (43), a married father of one, whose life story is emblematic of the complex realities facing informal settlers in Metro Cebu and, as mentioned, speaks to many of the key themes of this chapter and broader thesis. His poignant testimony and reflections on the changes he has witnessed in the coastal downtown settlement that he calls home, highlight the spatial and temporal dimensions of urban risk, while also exposing how socio-economic, political and environmental conditions interact with, and compound one another, to the effect of trapping residents in a web of vulnerability that is difficult to escape.

‘This picture of houses is the place of *Dagat Dagatan* [sea of giant clams], Lawis, Alaska, Mambaling, Cebu City. My name is Jerry and I live among these houses. I have lived in this place for 27 years. I have a wife and one daughter. In living here in this place, I worked as a shell craft maker, because this industry was booming in the year

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<sup>29</sup> All photovoice interviews were conducted in 2016 unless otherwise stated. At the insistence of research participants, respondent’s names have not been changed except in cases where anonymity was requested or deemed appropriate owing to the sensitive nature of the matters being discussed. All interview and focus group extracts are verbatim. The number in brackets gives respondents’ age.

of 1989. Aside from that I was a fisherman because the place where I live is near the sea. I did *pasol* [fishing with a hook and line] and *panginhas* [gathering of shellfish] because during that time, marine resources were abundant with fish and *kinhason* [shells]. Since then, [with] the construction of the South Reclamation Project, our life as fishermen is hell. Because this is a government project, we weren't able to do anything about this project. I was even made the president of a fisherman's organisation. We love this place because it is near the shore and it is near where we get our livelihood. And most of all, it is near the school. For now, we are feeling a bit tense because we are living in a place that is believed to be a government property. However there was one person who claimed that he owns the property. Thank God my daughter was able to finish schooling. Also I drive *trisikad* [pedicab] and my wife sells *lugaw tsampurado* [chocolate porridge] and we are living happily.'

Jerry wrote this transcript to accompany his photograph (see Figure 4.1), and read it aloud to me as we sat in his living room with his wife and daughter, the sound of the incoming tide gently meeting the bamboo poles supporting the wooden floor that separated us from the murky water below. Leaving a life of hardship in the province where he struggled to make ends meet farming sweet potato and cassava, Jerry and his wife moved to Alaska in the late 1980s, drawn to the city like so many others, by the hope of finding a more reliable means of earning a living. Embedded within his narrative are the contradictory feelings he has about his neighbourhood. Mirroring the views of other residents in the area, for Jerry and his family, the most valued feature of this densely populated informal settlement, is its downtown coastal location and close proximity to schools, markets and various livelihood opportunities, including the prestigious SM Seaside Mall (see Figure 4.2). However, as a consequence of its prime location in the city, this area, once considered a coastal wasteland, is now highly coveted, thanks in no small measure to the multi-billion peso South Reclamation Project (SRP)<sup>30</sup> and associated developments. As Jerry insinuates above, simultaneous to these developments, the ownership status of the lot on which he resides has become increasingly ambiguous, leaving him and other occupants in a state of uncertainty over their future tenancy. The majority of Alaska's residents have, like Jerry, been living there for more than 20 years, and given that many literally built their homes on the sea, land which according to Jerry is customarily not issued a title, they assumed the site to be government-owned. However according to Jerry, an individual had recently come forward claiming to be the rightful owner of the land. If substantiated by the

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<sup>30</sup> This mixed use development that was first approved in the 1990s and later renamed South Road Properties in 2006, involved landfilling a section of the sea between mainland Cebu and Kawit Island (now called Kawit Point). In addition to hosting the luxurious commercial and residential units of SM Seaside Mall which is reputedly the tenth largest shopping centre globally, the South Coastal Road also passes through the SRP, helping to alleviate some of the congestion from the city and speed up the commute for those coming to or from the south of the province.

courts, this would almost certainly place Jerry's family and their neighbours at risk of demolition and eviction.

*Figure 4.1 Dagat Dagatan, Alaska Mambaling, Cebu City*



Source: Photograph by Jerry, ALERT, 2016.

*Figure 4.2 Periphery of Alaska, Mambaling with SM Seaside in the distance*



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

When news of the proposed SRP first reached them, Jerry and fellow fishermen in the community came together and formed an organisation to lobby the government as a united front to resist this development that they worried would have detrimental effects on their way of life. They even organised a rally to make their concerns more visible to the public. However, despite their best efforts, the project went ahead, and as Jerry proceeded to describe in more detail, their fears proved correct. The construction of the SRP transformed the natural environment (see Figure 4.3), and, coinciding with other changes in the local economy, forced him and the many others who relied on the sea for their livelihoods to find an alternative means of generating an income.

‘The effect on us as fishermen is that before the construction of the SRP, all we had to do was go to the sea and we could get fish, and in low tide shells were abundant on the shore. But now things have changed and the shore has more mud than shells. The area was reclaimed [landfilled] so most of the area near the sea has turned into this muddy land. As fisherman we actually organised a rally at that time, but even though we made a protest, the police would arrive and then they would stop the entire activity. During that time, the government actually promised that they would help the fisherman have another livelihood, but then we didn’t receive any help so now there are still fisherman living here in the area, but most of us just looked for another job and stopped being a fisherman. They reclaimed the area in 2005 and in 2008 it was already very evident that there were less fishermen here. I tried before to go to another area, but we have boundaries so they would reprimand us for going there to fish. So when they reclaimed the area that is when I stopped being a fisherman.

I started driving the *trisikad* in 2008. Before, I also used to be a shell craftsman. We make handmade shell crafts here, [souvenirs and jewellery boxes], but then China began imports here in the Philippines, so the competition was detrimental to our livelihoods. While I was driving *trisikad*, my wife helped with the finances, and she started selling *lugaw tsampurado*, and that is one of the important factors why we were able to send my daughter to school to finish her [college] course [in human resources management, which she completed in 2015]. Before, when I was working as a fisherman and even when I turned to making shell crafts, the income that I was making was just enough, and now that I am driving a *trisikad*, my life is very much the same, I am making just enough to survive. Before, finding income was difficult but the prices were relatively low, so compared to now, it is the same, because you can get an income, but the prices are high. If we compare life before SRP and after SRP, life before was easier because marine resources were just nearby, so you could just go there and go fishing. But now it is difficult, especially for those fisher folk [see Figure 4.4] who were not able to find alternative jobs. They are the ones who are really suffering. I don’t know but if you compare the scarcity of fish, before SRP there were abundant fish, compared to now which is scarce. I don’t know but I think it is because of the SRP... We also experienced a fire here before, when my daughter was in grade six. ... Everything was gone (destroyed in the fire). We had to start again from scratch. Our machine for shellcrafts survived the fire, so we decided to just sell it and use the money to build another house because we knew that the shellcraft industry was disappearing.’

*Figure 4.3 Dagat Dagatan and SRP shoreline*



Source: Photograph by Jerry, ALERT, 2016.

*Figure 4.4 A local fisherman heading out to sea*



Source: Photograph by Jerry, ALERT, 2016.

Jerry's account of the changes he has witnessed and experienced over the years in Alaska, highlights the hybrid and intrinsically political and subjective nature of risks affecting informal settlers in Metro Cebu. Land tenure and livelihood (in)security intersect with and are a product of environmental and anthropogenic conditions, which are themselves a function of poverty, globalisation, economic policy and political agency (Wisner et al., 2004, 2012). Jerry's testimony also hints at feelings of political scepticism fuelled by broken promises and the wearing effects of fighting for survival and living in a perpetual state of uncertainty. In his mind, not only did the government driven SRP development place his livelihood at risk, but the state also failed to provide them with the support and employment alternatives they had promised. Some of the fishermen who actively participated in the meetings with government received assistance in the form of training or other resources to help them change livelihoods. However, the majority didn't feel comfortable attending the meetings, because according to Jerry, 'they actually don't know how to write even their names' and worried that if they were required to sign something, it might not be in their favour. Mistrusting the intentions of the state in these consultations, the majority of those whose lives had already been greatly disrupted by the SRP were left to adapt to their new circumstances and come up with their own solutions to the insecurity imposed on them by the interests and investments of the city's elite; a point of discussion that I revisit in subsequent chapters.

## ***4.2 Intergenerational poverty, gender and education***

### ***4.2.1 Rural hardship***

Jerry's life story shares many similarities with those of other informal settlers I came to know over the course of my research. Collectively, their journeys offer important insights into the cycles of risk and insecurity afflicting urban poor residents in the city more generally. Only six of the individuals I interviewed were actually born in Metro Cebu, the rest, like Jerry, having migrated from the province or neighbouring islands; most in search of work, some fleeing conflict (in Mindanao) or violence, and others as a consequence of family breakdown or other difficult life events. Although it was never mentioned directly, for those whose incomes in the province depended on farming or fishing, the effects of changing climatic patterns seemed to underscore the challenges they described that prompted them to migrate. Already living hand to mouth with few if any financial reserves to call on, depleting fish stocks, lower crop yields, and unexpected periods of drought or pest infestations forced many to abandon their family vocations and pursue alternative livelihoods in the city. Notably, those who were natives to Metro Cebu were among the

youngest respondents in my sample, with all but one aged 36 or less, and most having lived in the same community since birth. Although the sample size in this research is too small to make any substantive empirical claims, the reasons expressed by respondents for why they moved to the city suggests that rural to urban migration in Cebu and the associated growth of informal settlements in recent decades is at least in part a consequence of global warming and changing environmental landscapes. It also points to the ongoing importance of migration as an adaptive strategy to crisis in the archipelago (Chant and McIlwaine, 1995; Findley, 1987; Lauby and Stark, 1988; Tacoli, 2009; Trager, 1988; UNESCO et al., 2018).

#### **4.2.2 Gender and educational outcomes**

Incessant financial and livelihood insecurity was also a crosscutting theme among respondents across the different study sites which emerged in the preliminary focus group discussions and subsequent interviews. While some were notably better off than others, a few having managed to save enough money to buy a plot of land and build a house outside the settlement (either in another part of the city or in the province), it was clear that income poverty and the fear of demolition and eviction were the main sources of stress for the majority. Several individuals shared stories with me about their childhood, some breaking into tears as they recounted the difficulties they faced as children, forced to scavenge for food or for scraps of metal and plastic which they would sell to buy rice for themselves and their siblings. Despite any assurances that education would necessarily translate into improved employment and income generating opportunities, the importance of schooling featured time and time again in respondent testimonies, either in relation to their personal circumstances and ambitions, or as reflected in household budgeting priorities, the hopes and fears they expressed about their children.

As many as 46 percent of male respondents and 23 percent of female respondents<sup>31</sup> interviewed reported dropping out of school between grades two and six, some prioritising the need to make money to support their families, others describing themselves as *bugoy* (truant, happy-go-lucky) in their younger years and simply disinterested in school, preferring life outside the classroom. Among the larger sample of respondents who participated in the preliminary focus groups (61 individuals - 24 men and 37 women as recorded in Table 3.1), the proportions of men and women who dropped out before or on

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<sup>31</sup> All figures on female educational attainment have been adjusted to discount the four female respondents who did not disclose this information during their interview. The overrepresentation of men in this demographic is perhaps indicative of the pressures that even boys of elementary school age feel to provide for their families.

completing elementary school were 33 percent and 15 percent respectively, with men again overrepresented in this demographic. These findings are consistent with national figures that show a higher proportion of females (41.1 percent) having completed elementary education as a minimum compared to their male counterparts (36.4 percent), a trend that also prevails regionally (NSO, 2011: 1).

Also in line with national tendencies, female interview respondents were more likely than men to graduate from high school, (41 percent of women compared with 23 percent of men) however they were also much more likely to drop out in their high school years (27 percent of the women interviewed dropped out before finishing high school, while all male respondents that attended high school saw it through to completion).<sup>32</sup> In the larger sample of focus group participants however, a slightly lower proportion of women reported graduating from high school than men (27 versus 33 percent respectively), although females were again overrepresented among those who had dropped out (19 versus 13 percent). The difference noted in the gendered proportions of high school graduates between interview and focus group respondents undoubtedly reflects differing sample sizes, with the gender gap in the latter unsurprisingly being more comparable (albeit reversed) to that of national figures (20.9 percent for females and 19.6 percent for males) (Bersales, 2013: 21).

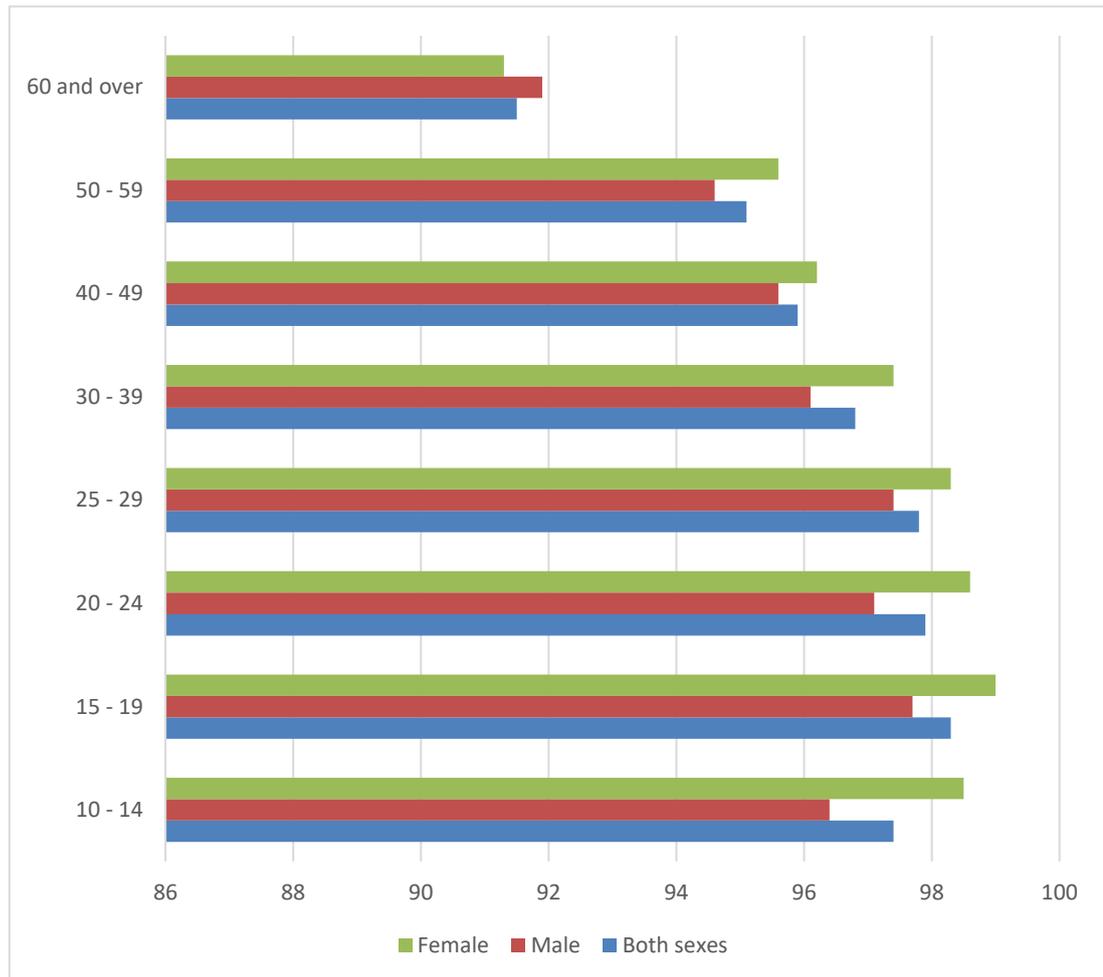
Discrepancies between interviews and focus groups including the reversed gendered ratios of high school graduates may also be related to slightly the older average age of participants in the focus group discussions (46) compared to the interviews (44). Efforts to promote 'Education for All' and to close the gender gap in education in the archipelago have only existed in any major capacity since the 1990s, with the Millennium Development Goals further inciting this agenda, so much so that national trends have been reversed with girls now outperforming boys in literacy and across all stages of education (Bersales, 2013; Education for All, 2015; Maligalig et al., 2010: 18). However the timing of these interventions means that these gendered outcomes have not benefited older members of the population (aged 60 or over), who have lower literacy rates overall (see Figure 4.5), are less likely to have graduated from high school or post-secondary education (see Figure 4.6), and where males have slightly higher levels of basic literacy than women of the same age cohort (Bersales, 2013: 55, 71). This helps to explain why in the larger and marginally

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<sup>32</sup> National statistics from the Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (Bersales, 2013: 21) indicate a slightly higher proportion of male high school dropouts (15.3 percent compared to 14.8 percent of females).

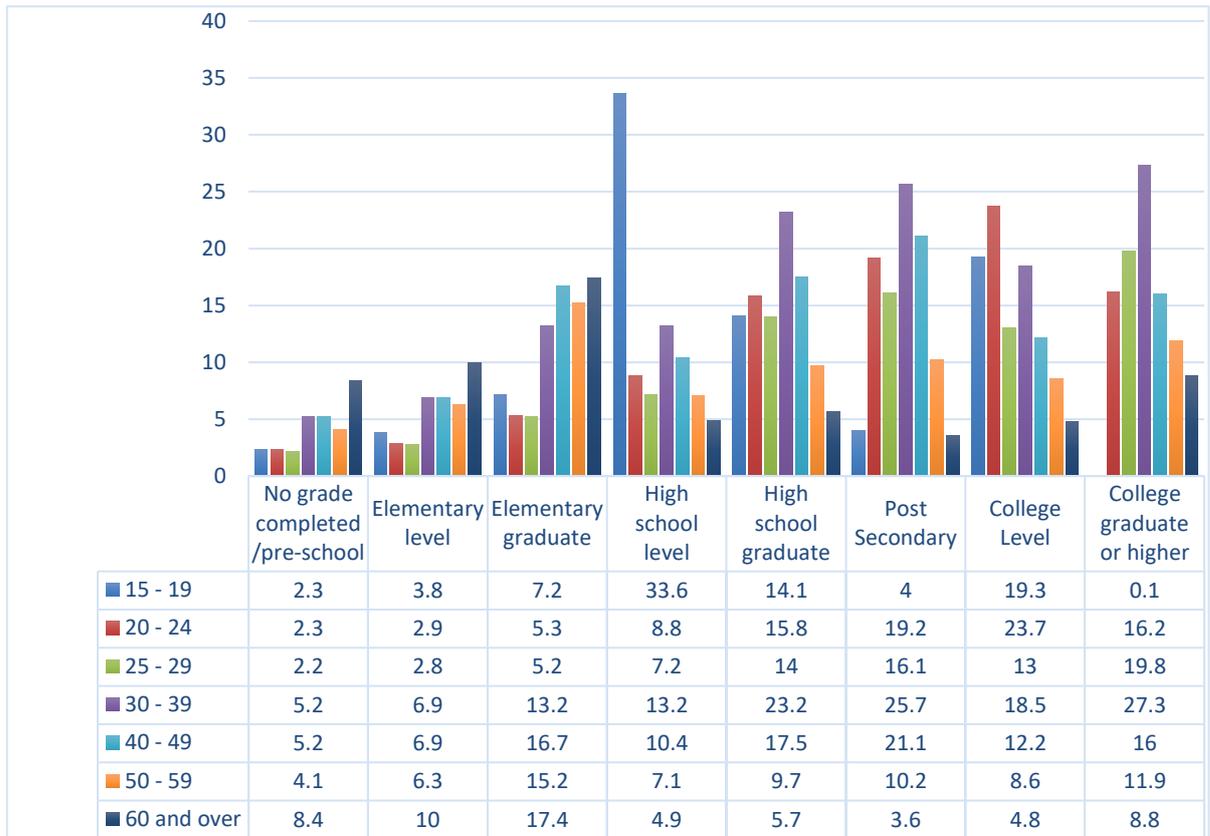
older sample population, a lower proportion of women reported graduating from high school than men.

Figure 4.5 National Literacy Rates by Age and Gender (percent)



Source: Author's elaboration of data in Bersales (2013, Table D.1: 35).

Figure 4.6: Highest Educational Attainment, by Age Cohort and Level of Education (percentage)



Source: Author's elaboration of data in Bersales (2013, Table 3: 35).

Furthermore, while female educational attainment and literacy may be higher nationally across the board, the notably higher proportion of female respondents who dropped out of high school in both sample groups importantly points to the emergence of obstacles for young adolescent girls growing up in poverty which prevent them from graduating or continuing in higher education (see Chant et al., 2017: 19–20; Unwin et al., 2007). Among female interview respondents, the two main reasons expressed as to why they dropped out were running out of money to finance their fees and other expenses, or falling in love and getting pregnant. Similar reasons were described by those women who proceeded to go to college,<sup>33</sup> which in both samples constituted a much smaller proportion than among male respondents (17 percent of men compared to 8 percent of women in the

<sup>33</sup> In the Philippines, the term college is colloquially applied to all tertiary educational institutions, including those offering specific vocational courses (such as nursing, human resources, hotel and restaurant management or information technology), as well as higher education universities and colleges offering graduate and undergraduate degree programmes in the arts, sciences and social sciences. Among respondents who self-identified as having gone to college, the majority appeared to have enrolled in vocational courses, although most did not specify what subject.

focus groups and 31 percent of men compared to 9 percent of women interviewed went to college). One male respondent also dropped out of college to find work when his wife became pregnant unexpectedly, indicating that the financial obstacles to continuing education are by no means gender specific. That said, there was evidence to indicate that when limited funds or resources are available, male children may in fact be given priority for schooling over females, with several female respondents telling me that they 'chose' (and in one case were essentially forced by their families) to drop out of college so that they could work to support their younger (often male) siblings, to finish school and/or go to college.<sup>34</sup> Respondent testimonies thus also contradict national findings of an inverse and widening gender gap (with males underrepresented) in secondary education enrolment and completion (Bersales, 2013; Maligalig et al., 2010; Santiago, 2008; UNGEI, 2006). This analysis suggests that national surveys may not accurately reflect the realities of low-income pupils, and specifically, the gendered obstacles both males and females encounter at different stages of childhood and adolescence that hinder their educational achievement, although further investigation, drawing on larger sample sizes, is necessary to validate whether the observations noted among respondents are statistically significant.

Common explanations given for male underachievement in education including parents having lower academic expectations of male children (UNGEI, 2006: 15) and relatedly forcing them to find work, (Santiago, 2008: 13), may hold true for boys in low-income households, helping to explain the overrepresentation of male interview and focus group respondents who reported dropping out during or upon finishing elementary school. However as Maligalig et al. (2010: 39) emphasise, drawing on data from the Annual Poverty Indicator Survey, 'reasons for not attending school in both age groups [elementary and secondary level] consistently revealed that lack of personal interest is the number one reason among boys, while it is the high cost of education for girls.' In any case, respondent testimonies highlight the ways in which gender, age and class disadvantages interact with one another to create and reinforce the structures of constraint (Kabeer, 2001) that affect access to education and which compound the barriers that individuals face in completing higher education qualifications. These findings reinforce the importance of considering household income, place of residence (e.g. slum) and life stage (e.g. age group) in analyses of gendered educational outcomes, especially if they are to serve as accurate indicators of gender (in)equality.

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<sup>34</sup> This pressure may reflect responsibilities ascribed to the eldest children in the family, rather than a case of gendered discrimination, although it is notable all the same.

## **4.3 Gender, labour and land tenure insecurity**

### **4.3.1 Access to livelihoods**

For men like Jerry who left school after finishing grade six, *trisikad* and *habal-habal* (motorcycle taxi) driving, or labouring on ships and construction sites are the main employment options available in the city, with heavy labour jobs known for being especially inconsistent, leaving many men without an income for several months of the year. Among male respondents who graduated from high school, the majority ended up working as security guards (often earning less than minimum wage), setting up their own small enterprises, namely *sari-sari* stores (small grocery outlets), or renting out rooms in their property. Where male livelihoods reflected some diversity in both the nature (informal, formal, contractual) and sector of employment, most female respondents involved in income-generation activities were working in the informal economy.

When asked about their livelihoods, the majority of these women initially identified themselves as unemployed, or more explicitly as a ‘simple’ or ‘plain housewife’, although in further discussion, it emerged that many were involved in various ‘*sideline*’ jobs, to supplement their partner’s income. Across all the study sites, these jobs typically included doing laundry for neighbours, running a *carinderia* (home-based eatery) or *sari-sari* store, ambulant food vending, weaving *puso* (hanging rice wrapped in palm leaves) or occasional small-scale assembly work from their home, mirroring Chant’s (2014: 310) findings of high levels of informal work diversification among women in the Philippine Visayas. For the minority who were ‘formally’ employed, several were working locally as street cleaners for the municipal ‘Clean and Green’ initiative, earning a monthly stipend of 4000 pesos (USD 80) for working four hours a day, seven days a week (translating to less than the national minimum wage). Despite the low salary, such work was highly valued by the women I met with and a source of personal pride.

Mother of three Mutya (39), who at the time of our interview had been working with her local Clean and Green team for around four months, described the benefits of having part-time work: ‘I like the job with the Clean and Green because it is just in the morning, so after my shift I get to do lots of stuff like preparing the clothes for my kids or doing things in my house... I work for four hours in the morning, every day, rain or shine.’ Referring to one of the photographs she had taken (see Figure 4.7), she said: ‘That’s my area where I clean. I just finished. I really liked taking this photo because I can see that the road is very clean [from my work].’ Prior to the fire that forced her to relocate to the Cebu International Convention Centre (CICC), her main livelihood, like most of her neighbours had been

weaving *puso*, alongside occasional home-based work assembling net brushes or doing laundry for her neighbours. 'Before I had a water pump near my house so the water source was very easy for me. But now, there is not a water source here so that is why I stopped doing the laundry. I had more income before than I do now [from the Clean and Green].' The fire resulted in Mutya losing not only her home, but also her livelihood that depended on local contacts and access to basic infrastructure (water), both of which had been disrupted through her relocation to the CICC.

*Figure 4.7: Pride at work with the Clean and Green*



Source: Photograph by Mutya, MUPHAI, 2016.

Some female respondents, especially those living in the hilly resettlement area of Laguerta, voiced their frustration at the dearth of livelihood options available to women who lack educational qualifications in comparison with men in similar circumstances, identifying this as an example of ongoing gender inequality affecting them. As 42 year old mother of one Lea, who left school in grade four, stated:

'There is a difference between me and my husband because I cannot work like him in the port area. I stay at home and go to the forest and collect firewood. It is hard for me to find work. He is carrying heavy loads at work. Most of the work opportunities for men is based on their strength, and so we have different opportunities.'

Lea's reflections echo accounts from female respondents in the other communities, who also described age-specific employment barriers facing women who lacked high school

or college degrees. As described by Alaska resident Marifel (39), who graduated from high school through the Alternative Learning System<sup>35</sup> and had recently completed a course in wellness and massage:

‘There are lots of livelihood opportunities and side-line jobs here [in Alaska] such as hog and chicken raising. But the main livelihood opportunities in the city are only available to you if you are around 25 or 30 years old. If you are older they don’t hire you. And if you have no school it is hard to find work.’

Persistent stereotypes such as those that presume women’s lack of physical strength or inability to protect themselves from violence or robbery, mean they are unlikely to be hired for work as labourers or in the transportation or security sectors, which unlike the more ‘female-oriented’ small assembly and service industries (Chant and McIlwaine, 1995), do not impose age-specific boundaries that blatantly target younger generations (see Figure 4.8). Intersections between age, gender and insecurity are also apparent in that older female respondents were more likely to be living in extended female-headed households (both de facto and de jure), in several cases caring for their sick partners, children and/or grandchildren. They were also less likely to be recipients of a state pension as a consequence of mostly having worked in the informal economy (if at all). These findings speak to the ways in which practical and strategic needs and interests are interconnected, and to the particular exclusions that emerge and are compounded by gender, age and class discrimination.

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<sup>35</sup> A parallel learning system administered by the Department of Education that provides a practical and flexible skills-oriented alternative to the existing formal education system.

Figure 4.8 A recruitment advert from popular fast-food chain Jollibee explicitly targeting young applicants

**Bee Part of our  
TEAM!**

**JB LAHUG**

If you're a **dynamic, hardworking, and high-spirited individual**, this is your chance to join the jolly force behind the **Number One fast-food chain.**

**Other Qualifications:**

- With good moral and academic background
- Currently enrolled and at least in first year college
- Young and energetic
- Team player and determined
- Willing to work on shifting schedules
- Age range 18-22 years old

Email your updated resume with picture to:  
jb0740@jollibee.com.ph  
or  
Text your complete name, address & contact number to:  
0932-854-3104 / 0942-039-4432  
we will reply to you as soon as possible...

*Interested applicants are requested to bring their bio-data w/ 1x1 ID picture for resumé screening.*

**Jollibee**

Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

### **4.3.2 Financial insecurity**

For both men and women, the daily struggles associated with economic and livelihood insecurity were repeatedly relayed to me throughout my fieldwork. Women however, seemed especially preoccupied by these issues, or at a minimum, vocalised their worries in the interviews more than men, possibly owing to heightened feelings of dependency on their partners' salaries stemming from the above discussed factors hindering their labour force participation. Women's greater sense of insecurity in this regard, was most acutely apparent in the focus group discussions, when participants were asked to rate on a scale from one to ten how sufficient their household resources were in meeting their households' daily needs (one being completely insufficient, ten being fully sufficient in covering food, health and shelter-related necessities). Across all the communities, bar a few individual exceptions, female respondents ranked themselves lower on the scale than their male counterparts,<sup>36</sup> and often considerably lower, even in cases where respondents were drawn from the same household. These observed differences in gendered perceptions of economic insecurity reinforce the point articulated by Wisner et al. (2004) among others, that (disaster) risks and vulnerability are subjectively experienced (and thereby gendered); an idea that is fundamental to the arguments put forth in subsequent chapters pertaining to gendered participation in homeowner associations and associated risk management activities.

The nature of discussions about financial insecurity also differed slightly by gender. Both male and female respondents described feeling stressed about money and lacking a stable income. For men, concerns and frustrations most frequently related to the long hours, low wages, and for those living in the outskirts of the city, long distance and costly transportation fees to get to and from work. General conditions of instability associated with both formal and informal employment were another common topic of conversation. Before securing work as a pharmacist assistant, high school graduate Glenn (27), who also completed a vocational course in computer hardware, moved from one *endo*<sup>37</sup> job to another, perpetually searching for more stable employment. However, even in his current

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<sup>36</sup> The average rank on this scale was 3.37 compared to 5.87 for men. Of the 37 female focus group participants, only four women ranked their household assets above six (two as seven and two as ten). Conversely, among the 24 men participants, eleven ranked their household assets above five, seven of whom recorded it as a ten on the scale.

<sup>37</sup> *Endo* is the colloquial shorthand term for 'end of contract', referring to the widespread practice of companies employing workers on temporary contracts that last just under the six month cut-off period at which point employees are legally recognised as regular workers and entitled to associated benefits.

role which he viewed as somewhat more secure, the difficulties of covering daily expenses remained:

‘I didn’t plan to work for the pharmacy. My work is usually contractual and it is the agency who is able to book me into this kind of work. My previous jobs before becoming a pharmacy assistant is usually *endo*. Here in my job at the pharmacy, if the owner is impressed with you, you can request to continue working for them and you will still have your job... Even though I am already working now, I think it is still difficult for us financially... I am not even paid minimum wage.<sup>38</sup> I started working for the pharmacy for only 275 pesos [USD 5.5], so now I am thankful that there is an increase in my salary, but based on what I have seen, these companies are mostly owned by Chinese, who are known for not paying the minimum wage. For me I don’t complain about my salary because the job given to me is not that difficult, but yes, most Chinese don’t pay minimum wage.’

Towards the end of our interview, Glenn reiterated the impact of economic insecurity on his life: ‘I think what I want you to understand with these photos is that for us here, the main difficulty for life that I think I share with other residents here is the financial difficulty. It is very difficult for us here in financial terms.’

Laguerta resident Jaime (57), who left school in grade three, described a similar cycle of precarity: ‘I really never had a permanent job [here]. I just get jobs from my neighbours if they need someone to carry materials for them... Before [transferring to Laguerta], I worked in the port area as a labourer, transferring rice from the ship to the trucks.’ Now, to make ends meet, in addition to the odd jobs for neighbours, Jaime harvests and delivers bamboo for the landowner in the hills nearby (see Figure 4.8).

‘It is very hard work. I still do it. But it was more difficult working in the pier because your whole body is sweating and you would work for more than 24 hours on a shift if you don’t have a replacement. We would make around 600 pesos [USD 12], not every day but for each load we had to clear. Doing the bamboo, I usually earn 300 pesos [USD 6] for cutting four poles of bamboo. It depends on the order of the customer and how many they need. One order or four poles would take me maybe two days to cut and deliver.’

When I asked him what his biggest challenge was on a daily basis, he immediately replied: ‘Finding work.’

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<sup>38</sup> Daily minimum wage in the Philippines are region specific and at the time of field work, in region VII (Central Visayas) it was between 308 -366 pesos (average of 337 pesos, USD 6.74) [http://www.nwpc.dole.gov.ph/pages/statistics/stat\\_current\\_regional.html](http://www.nwpc.dole.gov.ph/pages/statistics/stat_current_regional.html) (accessed 25 May, 2018).

*Figure 4.9 Hard at work*



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

As touched on above, women also spoke of difficulties securing work, and their perceived exclusion from many sectors of the labour market as a consequence of persistent gendered stereotypes and age-based discrimination. However more ubiquitous in these discussions was their recounting of the challenges of making insufficient and irregular resources stretch both temporally and functionally; the practical and emotional burdens of

managing household finances to feed, clothe and cover school and transportation fees for their children and partners captured in the simple statement made by a female focus group respondent: 'I feel stressed about my shortage of income. This is my main worry'. As described by married mother of four, Cheryl (38):

'Well I think food is probably the main worry or challenge every day, because my husband is on and off with his work, and I still have children in school. I am also always worried that our electric connection will be cut off. We still have to pay 2000 pesos [USD 40] for our bill. The reason why the bill piled up was because my husband has not had work for some weeks. Normally for two months he will have regular work and then it stops and he will have to wait one month until it starts again.'

Even Menchu (40) who was working full-time as a community organiser for the municipal government struggled to make ends meet:

'Until now I have not received my pay for two months. This is very usual from government jobs. They say that it is taking a long time to process the papers and make excuses as to why we cannot get paid on time. So I am always looking for alternative ways to make money. For example I am an Avon dealer, I also do food vending, and rice vending. Anything that comes to mind that I can get an extra salary from, I try it. We call this *raket*. The neighbours are also doing *raket*. Jocelyn for example is doing babysitting and sells mangoes.'

Many women across the study sites had resorted to taking out loans in order to make it through the periods where work and income were limited, bringing an additional source of worry, as one female respondent told me: 'I am also stressed about my ability to pay off debts... We really need the money to live and survive. It is part of our lives to have debt... We create loans to make other loans.'

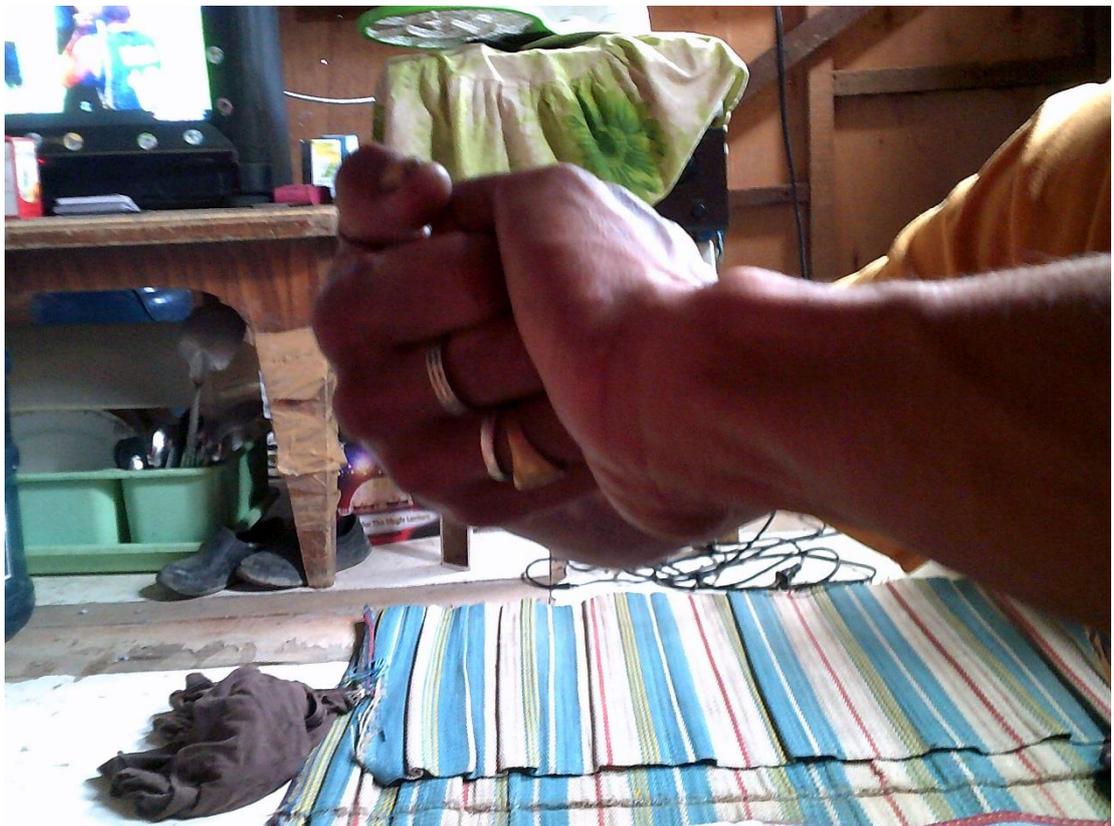
This is not to say that men do not lie awake at night feeling stressed about money and providing for their family; they too worry about these things, as Cheryl went on to reveal:

'There was a time when my husband didn't have work. And when I would tell him, we don't have rice anymore... Our kids will not be able to eat so they just have to sleep with empty stomachs. And my husband would get tearful and would cry because of that. Because he felt guilty for not being able to provide for us... I chose to take pictures of my husband's hands [see Figure 4.10] as a symbol of our life because I think that whatever happens in your life, if you stay holding hands and if you stay together and are not separated you can manage anything. Because whatever problems that you encounter in life, if you help each other and work together, anything is possible.'

Some male respondents also recited detailed calculations of household expenses and cost saving mechanisms, though for the most part, even they agreed that it was their female partners who assumed the primary responsibility for household budgeting as part of their

wider domestic duties, especially for food. Furthermore, men, even if only sporadically in work and earning a small income, seemed to find some element of comfort in the fact that they were living up to cultural expectations that posit them as the breadwinners. The importance of employment to male identity and sense of self featured prominently across all the interviews with male respondents, but especially so in the interview with thirty four year old *trisikad* driver Jeffery. His account (see Figure 4.11 and Box 4.1) emphasises the importance of livelihoods to male status, identity and sense of connectedness and belonging, with implications in turn for their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Where income generation unsurprisingly constitutes a core part of male identity and self-confidence, for women, access to livelihoods also offers them a degree of independence from their husbands and added sense of security, a point that will be revisited in Chapter 6.

*Figure 4.10 Stronger together*



Source: Photograph by Cheryl, TAHAS, 2016.

Figure 4.11 A story about trisikad drivers



Source: Photograph by Jeffery, ALERT, 2016.

**Box 4.1 'A story about trisikad drivers'**

'This photo is a story about *trisikad* drivers. I think that *trisikad* drivers help a lot of people. Number one, these *trisikad* drivers like me, we were not able to attend school, so through driving tricycles that is where our income comes from. It is for our breakfast, our lunch, our dinner our snacks, it is how our families live... This *trisikad* driver is Jason [name anonymised]. Before Jason became a *trisikad* driver, he was, like mentally unstable. You could just see him roaming around the neighbourhood before. Eventually, his friends suggested to him, "Jason, we will buy you a *trisikad* and you can drive and earn money so that you won't just be roaming around the neighbourhood thinking about things."

I am very thankful that Jason was able to start his *trisikad* driving because before he was mentally unstable and just laughed or just kept quiet while roaming around the neighbourhood, and now you can really understand what he is saying and he is very interactive with us. We interact with each other. Maybe that's because it's different if you are just like sitting down, doing nothing and with *trisikad* driving you sweat a lot, you have physical activity and you are focused while you are driving. So I think the *trisikad* driving helped Jason a lot. Now he is joining our basketball league, so he is very now interactive with other people. It is not like before.'

Source: Interview with Jeffery, ALERT, 2016.

### 4.3.3 Land tenure and the threat of demolition

Inextricably connected with circumstances of poverty and livelihood insecurity is the issue of land tenure insecurity; a recurrent theme and major point of concern emerging from the narratives and life histories of male and female respondents across all five study sites. Many recounted past experiences of having their homes demolished or being forced to dismantle their houses themselves and relocate elsewhere as landowners decided to develop or sell the land. All respondents were acutely aware of the fact that they did not own the land they

resided on, with several referring to themselves and neighbours as ‘squatters’; a term that denotes temporality and a state of transience, alongside an acknowledgement of illegitimacy in some regard. Previous experiences coupled with the acceptance of their ‘squatter status’ and a general mistrust of the state and urban elite (as alluded to earlier in Jerry’s account of the hesitancy of fisher folk to engage in SRP meetings), left many haunted by the threat of demolition. More than the threat of the demolition itself, it was the fear of being evicted without the offer of a relocation site that caused the most worry. Ironically, this was even the case for respondents living in the publicly-owned resettlement area of Laguerta that had been purchased precisely to offer households being evicted from ‘danger zones’ and other informal settlements somewhere to live in the city.

As is the case in most relocation sites around Metro Cebu, before moving to Laguerta, residents had to pay a down payment of a few thousand pesos to secure their lot, and signed a memorandum of agreement stipulating a monthly repayment scheme over a fifteen year period to cover the cost of their lot (valued in the region of 68,000 pesos each, USD1360), after which they would be issued a title deed. However, within months of relocating, the majority of the residents I interviewed found themselves unable to afford the monthly repayments (their financial difficulties exacerbated by the disruption to their livelihoods and expensive transportation costs discussed above) and subsequently accrued substantial interest penalties over the years, more than doubling their debt. As recounted by one female resident who found herself in that position ‘we cannot pay the money back to the government for the land and if we cannot pay, we might be demolished. I am not sure what will happen.’

Respondents unanimously spoke of their willingness in principle to pay monthly dues towards the lot if it would secure their right to remain, however in the absence of stable employment and affordable transportation links, this was understandably challenging in practice to sustain. Manuel (43), who transferred to Laguerta in 2007 from another settlement in the city where he and his family had been renting a small shack, elaborated on the land tenure situation for most in Laguerta:

‘... right now the price is 700 pesos [USD 14] per month, which is too high for us, especially because we still have so many difficulties with the transportation costs which is very expensive for us. We stopped paying three years ago. For me personally, I would want for all of us [in the community] to take paying the monthly dues seriously, but currently with the condition of our penalties and the interest, it is just taking all of what we are paying monthly so nothing is being contributed to paying the title.’

Unlike most residents of Laguerta, Manuel and his wife have a well-located *sari-sari* store which brings in additional income alongside his regular salary from working as a security guard and ‘*sideline*’ of driving *habal-habal* on his day off. If he and his family struggle with the monthly repayments despite having several streams of income, the issue of lot repayment becomes even less likely for those without a permanent job.

As has been detailed in this chapter thus far, poverty is multi-dimensional and intrinsically gendered in both an affective and material sense (Chambers, 1995; Chant, 2008; Moser, 1996, 1998). Indeed, respondent narratives highlight the complex ways in which practical and strategic gendered needs and interests intersect with one another, with access to education impacting livelihood and income generating opportunities, with obvious implications for their housing options, access to basic infrastructure and general sense of security. Building on these discussions, the remainder of this chapter explores how poverty and land tenure insecurity interact with other aspects of risk and vulnerability, and how gender in particular, is embedded in respondents’ articulations of their encounters with risk. It concludes with a summary of the similarities and differences between respondent narratives across the study sites, offering some reflections on the relevance of these findings to urban development and DRRM scholarship and practice.

#### ***4.4 Health, safety and violence in informal settlements: a gendered perspective***

##### ***4.4.1 Health risks in informal settlements***

As alluded to above, under the circumstances of impoverishment in which the majority of respondents are living, women’s gendered responsibility for ensuring the health and wellbeing of their family proves particularly complicated. The hazardous social and environmental conditions that characterise daily life in these informal settlements leave many women in a constant state of worry; particularly as concerns the safety and general welfare of their children. For Edelita, a widow of 65 who lives with her daughter (also widowed) and six grandchildren, it is their journeys to and from school that she feared most, ‘afraid of rape, or that they will fall and get injured on the slopes.’ Carol (42), whose ten and twelve year old sons have to cross a busy highway by *habal-habal* to reach school, similarly told me that she calls their teachers every morning to make sure her boys have not been in an accident. The challenges of safeguarding their family’s health were also relayed by other female respondents, including 35 year old Laguerta resident Sally, who spoke to me of the difficulties of providing her family with a balanced diet. Describing a photograph she had taken of a poster of a fruit bowl she had hanging in her house (see Figure 4.12), she said:

'... ever since I have a family I always want to provide them with the right kinds of food for their health to be good as well. That is why I like the photo of lots and lots of fruit. But right now we can't afford actually to buy fruit so there is a difficulty for me to provide a good nutrition for my family.'

*Figure 4.12 The importance of a balanced diet*



Source: Photograph by Sally, TULHOA, 2016.

The inaccessibility of healthy and affordable food in many informal settlements places the ideal of a balanced diet outside the reach of most. In fact, several respondents reported surviving on less than two meals a day, with women in particular describing going without so that their children could eat more. As discussed by Chant and McIlwaine (2016: 114–5), malnutrition further compounds the multiple disease burdens afflicting slum-dwellers as a consequence, inter alia, of overcrowding and absent or insufficient water and sanitation (WASH) infrastructure. Dengue, diarrhoea, intestinal worms and other illnesses and digestive diseases associated with poor quality WASH systems were common health issues afflicting all respondents, but proving especially dangerous for children. Sally told me that children in the community, including her own, were often sick with stomach problems and diarrhoea, which she attributed to poor water quality. It turned out her suspicions were correct. After incessant complaints from residents, tests conducted by the city revealed high levels of faecal matter in the water; water it should be noted, that residents were purchasing from a private supplier in the absence of a connection from the city's main provider, the Metropolitan Cebu Water District. Similar concerns about the ill health of children or

partners were voiced by women in the other communities, and, as testament to their apprehensions, over the course of my fieldwork, I routinely heard about children in the communities contracting dengue, including three children of research respondents, all of whom ended up in hospital. During my final field visit, I was also given the sad news that a young woman I had interviewed passed away from an asthma attack, leaving behind her husband and two year old daughter. Over the same period (and in the same community), another woman I had interviewed lost her two year old daughter to a fever.

Such realities make it easy to understand why many residents, including Glenn, feared becoming sick or injured: 'we really don't know what will happen in the future, for example if I get sick or in regards to my health. So our health is a major source of worry for us.' The high cost of healthcare adds yet another dimension of challenge to the mix. I personally witnessed families waiting until conditions had worsened to a point of severity before seeking medical attention. Although many respondents said their status as 'indigents' means they are entitled to free healthcare through the government subsidised PhilHealth programme, this only applies to public hospitals, which typically have long waiting times and have run out of stock, requiring patients to source medicine independently from private pharmacies. The gamble associated with accessing public healthcare was depicted in Carol's recounting of a scary experience she'd had a few years back when one of her boys became unwell unexpectedly:

'I thought my child had dengue so I went to the hospital and put him into the dengue lane. We were waiting for the people in the hospital to attend to him, but we waited for so long and nobody was assisting him. They just kept on telling us to wait... [T]hen eventually we knew that it was appendicitis and that he needed an operation... [but it] couldn't be done faster because there was only one anaesthesiologist... What is difficult also at that time is that we hadn't received our salary yet, so I only had 5000 pesos [USD 100] and the medicine that was needed for my child was 10,000 pesos [USD 200]. So I texted Councillor Lea [a local politician] with our situation and she called me up and told me to use my PhilHealth to get the medicine for my child... but the medicine was not in stock [in the public hospital] so it was useless. We had to buy it outside the hospital and borrow money to pay for it. I also got into a heated argument with the doctor because they have their own list of priorities. But my son's appendix was already blown and he was looking different. The doctor told me "why don't you go to a private hospital", so I had to get into a heated argument with him before he operated... The councillor was able to help us in order for my child to be prioritised in the public hospital so that people would attend to my son. Because that is the most problematic thing in public hospitals; that you won't be prioritised because of a lot of people in the hospital. But if you get referred by a politician, then you can get immediate care.'

Had Councillor Lea not been willing to advocate on her behalf, it is scary to think of what might have happened, though needless to say, favours nested in patron-clientelism often come with their own risks and costs.

It was therefore not surprising that many female respondents, including mother of three Mariella<sup>39</sup> (39), identified health as the main risk and source of stress for her and her family: 'yes there are (risks). It is difficult for us. Mostly concerning the health of my children and my not having the money to pay for them.' For Mariella, second to health were the risks associated with drugs and more specifically, the state's approach to dealing with drug addicts and dealers:

'The police have been coming here for *tokhang*.<sup>40</sup> They knock on your door and tell you to surrender or change your ways and stop being an addict. For my husband, he surrendered to the police and told them that he is a drug addict but now he will change. I am not sure if really my husband has changed or stopped taking drugs. Maybe other people know if he is still using, but I don't know. [Her only indication, she said, was the difference in his appetite and his temper]. So that is one of the things that I am worried about, policemen coming here. That's the threat. Because if you already surrendered and told the police that you are going to change and be good, when they learn that you are still using, they will just shoot you and you will be dead. So the risks are from the drug addicts [associated criminal behaviour] and the safety of my husband as well. Since there are drug addicts here in the community, there might be a shootout. I am worried about if there is an instance where policeman will just shoot them here in our place.'

#### **4.4.2 Violence \*warning distressing image below\***

Mariella's fears reflected a threat in informal settlements that became increasingly prominent over the course of my fieldwork, which spanned the election of President Rodrigo Duterte, whose rise to power was largely premised around his self-declared 'war on drugs' and 'iron-fist approach' to dealing with criminals. Since the launch of *Oplan Tokhang* in 2016, more than 700,000 users and dealers of drugs have allegedly surrendered, with reports in the communities I was working in that many had also gone into hiding. As part of this programme, several thousand people have been killed by the national police and vigilantes in supposed drug-related, extra-judicial killings; the majority of victims being urban poor informal settlers, prompting the International Criminal Court in The Hague to launch an investigation into Duterte's role in orchestrating these deaths in 2018. Such

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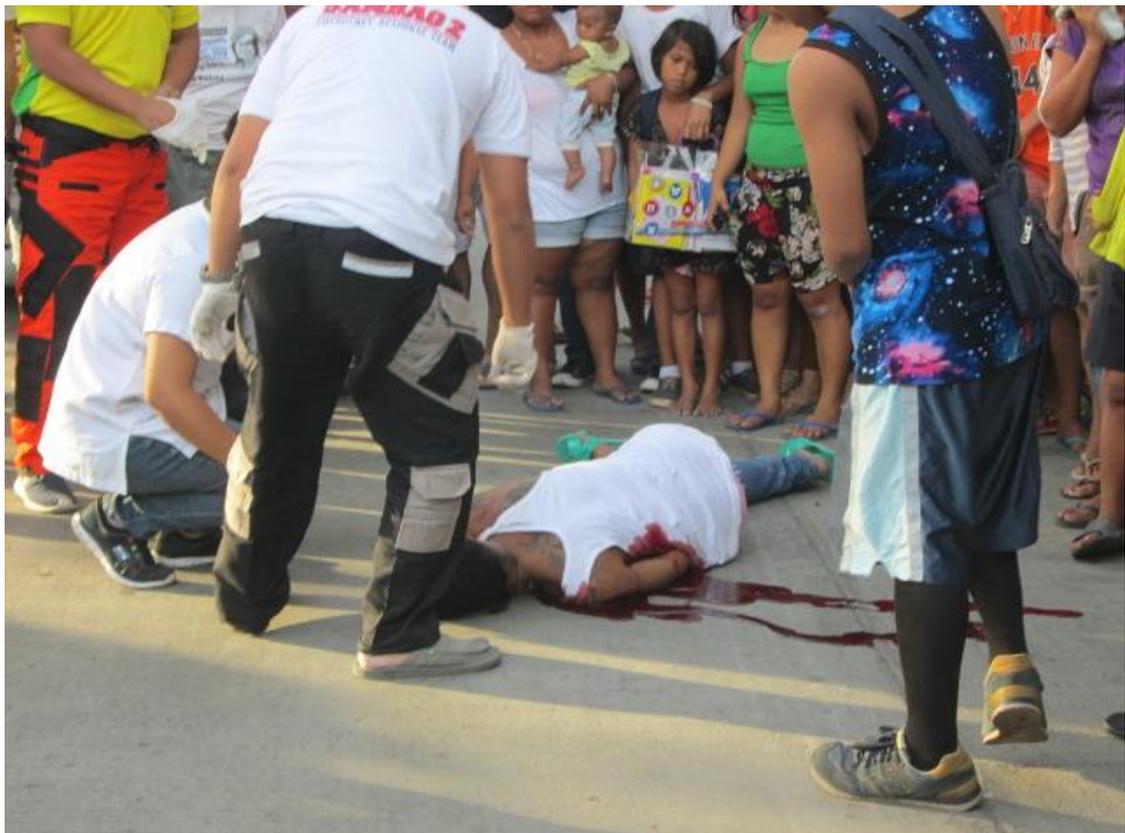
<sup>39</sup> Respondent's name has been changed to preserve anonymity.

<sup>40</sup> *Tokhang* is a Visayan term *toktok-hangyo*, translating to 'knock (on the door) and appeal', that has gained notoriety through *Oplan Double Barrel* (Operation Double Barrel); a project launched in 2016 by the Duterte administration as part of his so-called 'war on drugs'. Targeting suspected users and dealers at the community level, *Oplan Tokhang* involves law enforcement officials knocking on the doors of suspects, and tell them to stop their illegal activities and surrender to the authorities (or risk death). *Oplan High-Value-Target* is the other stream of *Oplan Double Barrel*, focusing on large scale drug traffickers, though given the wealth, power and political status of many of the alleged traffickers, in the absence of real evidence, most have escaped with impunity (see Dangerous Drugs Board, 2018; National Police Commission, 2016).

killings, although most prominent in Metro Manila, have also been taking place on a smaller scale in Metro Cebu; for some respondents, very close to home. In fact, as Jerry was making his way home following our meeting to discuss the photography activity connected with my research, he stumbled upon the following scene (see Figure 4.13):

‘According to some witnesses, there was a tandem motorcycle with two unknown riders and just suddenly they shot him three times. From that point, this person fell down then the unknown riders in the motorcycle ran away. This is allegedly the activities of vigilantes. I was riding by on my bicycle from the FORGE meeting when I passed by and saw this had just recently happened so I took a photo of it. For now [lately], I think these vigilante killings are always happening. I think I observed this [vigilante killings] in past [government] administrations, where some would have more killings, like that, and then another administration would come in and then it would stop or slow down, and now I can see that it is coming back. I think this is always related with drugs and criminals, and the reason why the administrations sometimes don’t have that strong vigilante movement, is because they are not that interested in doing something or doing some action in order to prevent this [drugs and criminality]... [B]ased on things that I have heard, these vigilantes are hired by politicians or police themselves in order to prevent criminality from getting bigger.’

*Figure 4.13 Death on our doorstep*



Source: Photograph by Jerry, ALERT, 2016.

From my initial discussions with respondents in the preliminary focus groups (which took place prior to Duterte’s election) through to the one-to-one interviews

conducted in the midst of *tokhang*, users and dealers of *shabu*<sup>41</sup> were identified as a risk by residents across all five study sites, including married mother of seven, Bebe (33):

‘To be honest with you here in Laguerta there are a lot of drug addicts, and I am very much worried for the sake of my family. Especially if they come home late at night. I am always worried about that. I worry that they might just choose a person and do something bad to them. That has happened here before. Like rape for example, it was done in the plaza housing area over there.’

As depicted in Bebe’s account, those affiliated with drugs (often ascribed male pronouns) were perceived by respondents as dangerous, violent, and unpredictable, and were often blamed for thefts, rapes and other crimes, including (accidental) arson in some communities.

Although some, such as Mariella, feared for the safety of their family and friends, respondents felt that criminality in their areas had reduced with *tokhang* and also said they now felt safer in their communities. Marifel, who lives in the same area as Jerry, shared her thoughts on the local impact of *tokhang*:

‘Before, here in this community, there were a lot of conflicts, but since the Duterte administration, my fears or worries have lessened, because we know that there are people here who are involved in illegal doings, so before we wouldn’t like to go outside at certain times for fear that someone might get killed, but now... with the current administration, I feel much more free, because we can go out without worrying too much. Because even if people are being killed, you know that that is because they are involved with drugs and illegal actions.’

Similar feelings were expressed by residents in other areas, including father of two, *habal-habal* driver Nelson (35): ‘Before there were cases of stealing. We were very scared then. Especially because during that time, drug cases were also very rampant, but now it is getting better.’ When I asked him what had changed to make it better, he said:

‘They are dead... Maybe they killed each other within their group or from outside by the police but they are dead so it is nice now... I know that this area has been a target of the police since before, but I think that now, the people who the police have been targeting have left. Some ran away and others are dead. There is always something to be scared about living here. Even now. The police stations are very far from us and as I told you the people here are war headed and quarrel and fight even using guns. So I just get scared. I don’t get involved. If they are fighting then that is their problem, but still I am afraid. I think that is the only thing that we worry about here. But I think those guys that we worry about are not here anymore.’

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<sup>41</sup> The colloquial term for methamphetamine.

As the above testimonies reveal, while both male and female respondents are affected by crime and other acts of public violence, men in informal settlements appear to be particularly vulnerable to state-sanctioned violence connected with Duterte's 'war on drugs'.

Within the domestic sphere however, women and children are the main recipients of violent acts, with several female respondents telling me about friends or neighbours who have been abused, others describing or insinuating their personal experiences of violence at the hands of their partners. Some eventually left them, others remained with them but told me they had found ways to navigate their partner's tempers, which typically worsened with alcohol and drug use, and almost always stemmed from arguments 'about money or jealousy', as summarised by one female respondent. Many of the women told me that their husbands grew 'angry' when they raised the matter of how incomes were shared, including one female respondent (40):

'My husband is a barber. And you know, a barber makes so much money. But he only gives us 200 pesos [USD 4] a day. And that money, you will spend that one. You know that kid [her son] he will spend 100php in one day if you give every time he asks. That is why when you count the money that his father is giving to me of 200 pesos, minus the [travel] fare and the rice, you know you cannot buy. I think that when he has a full day of customers, he will make not less than 500 pesos [USD 10]. So much more for him. But I just receive it, it is tiring to always be asking about it. You know we have lots of fighting, you know, he wants to hit me. This is the worst thing that he did [points to a scar on her face].'

Her testimony, and others like it, shed further light on women's heightened sense of economic insecurity, discussed earlier. Understanding, or at a minimum, having an awareness for gender-related vulnerabilities to violence, and distributions of unpaid domestic responsibilities is crucial when it comes to appraising the impacts of existing programmes or developing new community-based initiatives, as they often reveal existing power hierarchies that might otherwise go unnoticed but which warrant special attention in any participation-oriented activity. Furthermore, in the context of disaster management programming, as Bradshaw and Fordham (2013) attest, gender-related vulnerabilities, labour burdens and exposure to violence may worsen in the aftermath of disasters, all of which are likely to influence the personal impacts of such events, not to mention how the 'disaster' is perceived in the first instance. In addition to the aforementioned health risks associated with infrastructural neglect, crime and violence, as I discuss below, housing itself is an important determinant of residents' health outcomes.

## ***4.5 Housing and hazards***

### ***4.5.1 Housing and the risk of flooding***

The material quality and location of housing structures also featured frequently in discussions about personal safety and security, with many respondents describing their housing circumstances using a language of risk. This emerged not only in relation to their insecure land tenure as discussed above, but also in terms of respondents' exposure to environmental and anthropogenic hazards, which they often attributed to the precarious location and structural quality of their homes. Across all of the study sites, heavy rains took their toll on residents, who spoke of regular flooding, or if not flooding in a conventional sense, of having to deal with water, dirt and waste flowing into their houses whenever it rained. For those living near creeks or other flood prone areas, flood risk was perceived as more of a nuisance than an immediate source danger in itself, although, as articulated by Nilda (50), flooding produced and exacerbated other risks that threatened the wellbeing of residents:

'After the rain there is always lots of trash that floats into the pathway so I always want to clean it... It is a usual occurrence here that when it rains, the water levels in this pathway rises, so we have been continuously adding more land into it, but it keeps on coming back again and again, and with it comes the trash from the areas surrounding our community... The water is very dirty. So our place is also dangerous with mosquito infestations that are roaming around our community and cause sickness among our members.'

Residents had adopted various practices to try to manage with the inadequate drainage infrastructure, as depicted in Sitio Aroma resident Bernadita's (45) recounting of her daily routine:

'Here [see Figure 4.14] I am draining the stagnant water here, because the water is stuck up. So if I do not drain the water by using this tool which is more like a modified dipper [plunger], then the water will come inside here [in the house]. Every morning, after I do the laundry or after we take a bath, we have to do this because the canal is stuck up in that area so the flow has been obstructed. To prevent stagnant water, we have to drain it using that dipper. The flow is [obstructed] because of garbage.'

Figure 4.14 Everyday efforts at flood prevention



Source: Photograph by Bernadita, SAHA, 2016.

#### **4.5.2 Landslides**

Conversely, for those living in the hills of Laguerta, despite their distance from the creek in the valley, ‘flooding’ as they termed it, was a major point of concern, as voiced by mother of four Daya (38): ‘the dangers or the risk [*delicado*] of the location that we are in, that whenever there are floods or heavy rains, we are in danger.’ The danger Daya was inferring to was landslides; a risk that kept the majority of Laguerta’s residents on high alert in the rainy season, including mother of five, Janet (42):

‘Usually if there is rain, the rocks erode and the only thing that we are able to put on it to support it is tarpaulin, because we don’t have the budget. One of our neighbours he has a small house that almost was washed away from a landslide... If ever it rains we worry that our house will also be affected.’

Samuel (53), who has lived in Laguerta since 2005, lost part of his house to a landslide a few years back: ‘Every time there is a heavy rain, we might be covered in mud. It is very scary.’ Showing me around the single room shack (see Figure 4.15) that housed him, his partner and four of his children, he said:

'With my house now, most of the materials it is constructed from came from my previous house in Pier Sayis because we don't have a budget or money to spend on our house. And the compensation that they gave us [for relocating] really wasn't enough... The wood is starting to rot so it is really not a stable house because of the termites. Before it was bigger, but a landslide destroyed it so I had to repair it. Now it is a smaller house.'

Many other residents in Laguerta were also living in houses built from the materials they could salvage from their previous lots, including Jaime (see Figure 4.16):

'My roof has holes already and my foundations already were eaten by termites, so I keep adding wood to prop it up. I get my water from the spring and use the hills for my comfort room [toilet]... It is really my dream for my house to be repaired because if it rains, it is very difficult for you to find a place in my house where you will not be wet. I follow where the drips are and try to catch them with buckets.'

Lower Mahiga residents also feared the rains for similar reasons, including Carol: 'This area in this picture is quite prone to landslides in the rainy season... [and] is just above where we are staying. That is why if the rain is too strong, I don't get to sleep because I get really worried that our house will be covered in mud.' For Carol, these worries are exacerbated by the absence of support from local DRRM teams in the aftermath of these events:

'When we had a landslide some time ago, we requested for help from the barangay to assist us, and I also posted some photos of the landslide area on Facebook tagging the barangay councillors to ask... if somebody can come over and shovel it out, because it is really dangerous, but there was no response for the disaster even to clean the area. They already promised us that they would send people from the disaster department to help us clean the area up but no one came... it has been weeks, months that we waited for that person to come and no one showed up. [Eventually]... they just sent us a wheelbarrow.'

This state of endless waiting amidst empty promises, adds to the fear and anxiety that residents experience about these events, reflecting another dimension to the 'environmental suffering' of the urban poor (see also Auyero and Swistun, 2009: 6).

*Figure 4.15 Samuel's landslide prone shack*



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

*Figure 4.16 Dreaming of home improvement*



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

### 4.5.3 Fear of fire

Fires were another risk identified by respondents that they related in part to the materials location and general condition of their housing. They were also ubiquitously the most feared of events traditionally conceived of within the realm of disasters, owing to their dangerous and destructive nature. Fires were a common threat affecting informal settlements across the metropole; a scary reality reaffirmed by testimonies of respondents in all areas, many of whom had lost their homes, some, more than once, to fire, including CICC occupant, Juanillia:

‘This picture [see Figure 4.17] shows my motorcycle. This is what I use to buy things for my *sari-sari* store. I really love this motorcycle because it helps me in my livelihood. I bought it about three years ago... for my personal use, but after the fire, since the market here is too far away from CICC I use it to get to the market. The [only] items that I was able to salvage from the fire was this motorcycle and the documents from the MUPHAI sinking fund which I showed you before. Before the [most recent] fire, I had been living here for 29 years. We had two fires [previously]’.

Figure 4.17 Salvaged from the fire



Source: Photograph by Juanillia, MUPHAI, 2016.

Ironically, the topic of fire risk had dominated much of the preliminary focus group discussions in Zone 3, where residents were acutely aware of their vulnerability, as relayed

by one female focus group participant: 'We are prone to fires and the fire fighters cannot enter the community because the passages are so narrow.'

This fear continued to haunt them at the CICC, as relayed by Saturnino (53) who, prior to the fire, had worked as a security guard, but now relied on his '*sideline*' work of tailoring, as his uniform was lost in the blaze and he lacked the funds to buy a new one: '... if someone smokes a cigarette and throws it on a roof, we could have a fire so it is a very dangerous situation for us. Even if we are very careful... but the one beside you isn't careful enough, all of us will be affected... since most of us use tarpaulin [which is very flammable], so it is a very risky situation.' CICC resident Mutya agreed: 'There is a possibility that we might have a fire again here [at CICC]... We live very close to each other... Here it is more risky for fire. Because we only have makeshift houses here so the materials are much more flammable.' Fire was feared all the more so given the absence of water at CICC, a point of focus in the interview with Nuy Bistring (69):

'In this picture [Figure 4.18-left] I am carrying water buckets. My shoulder muscles are in pain because it is heavy. I get the water from here in this area and need to carry it over to my house which is very far so they are heavy and that is why my arms get sore. The water that I am carrying in the picture is for bathing, for washing our clothes and for other uses in our house. But what is more difficult to get is the water for drinking... It is like being in the desert. The situation here is difficult because we rely on the truck for the water [Figure 4.18-right]. Imagine when they don't deliver any water for us, we can't do anything about it. We just wait for the water to come. [When the water has run out] we don't take a bath [if there is no delivery] so if we still have water, we just budget it until the next delivery. We just have to accept the fact that if there is no delivery then no water.'

Mutya told me that water deliveries at the CICC were contingent on water usage in other parts of the city: 'If there is a fire in this area or somewhere [in or near Metro Cebu], then it is understood that there is no delivery for water here, because what they use for responding to the fire is the same water they would use for us. It is the same budget...The longest that we had no delivery of water was one week.'

Figure 4.18 'Like being in the desert'



Source: Photographs by Nuy Bistring, MUPHAI, 2016.

This preoccupation over fire risk extended to other communities as well, where residents had also experienced fires in the past, including Aroma resident Christina (45), who recounted her last encounter with fire:

'... we have already had two fires, one in 2003 and one in 2010. And with both fires, I wasn't able to save things from my house. That was in our previous house, because we were located in a very narrow area. So during the fire, the pathways were very narrow and people would bump into each other trying to get outside or go back to their houses. The only things I carried with me were my children and I ran out. My children were the only things I was able to secure... Saved the children and our bodies... Sometimes I still feel scared or I am afraid because some people just shout fire! Fire! And I feel this really big, you know, like my heart starts beating faster and I get really scared when that happens.'

The risk of fire in Sitio Aroma had become even more pronounced after developers of an adjacent lot erected a wall around the settlement (see Chapter 5), restricting residents to a single passage for entering and leaving the community. According to mother of four Lorna (35):

'This fence is really causing us troubles and difficulties. Because before, when the fire burnt down our community we lost all of the things that we had, even our houses. How much more will we lose now that there is a fence surrounding us? Especially if a fire starts in block one, where are we going to exit or go through? Not only will there be houses burnt down but also people will be burned too.'

In addition to the main causes of fires identified by respondents as flammable housing materials, overused electric connections prone to short-circuiting, and the proliferation of kerosene stoves, fires were also attributed to arson, a point of discussion that I revisit in subsequent chapters.

## ***4.6 The 'everyday' versus the 'exceptional': concluding reflections on risk and disaster***

### ***4.6.1 'Natural' disasters with unnatural causes***

This chapter has contextualised issues of risk and insecurity in informal settlements as seen from the perspectives the urban poor themselves. Each of the five study sites have unique histories and geographies that shape the gendered riskscapes depicted by respondents, however, across their narratives, some key themes emerge. Firstly, it is evident that despite living in areas categorised as 'danger zones' or 'disaster prone', concern for the everyday risks associated with poverty, slum-dwelling and survival clearly outweighs the potential threat of large scale 'disasters', though the former have notable implications on how the latter are experienced. These everyday risks include the related issues of land tenure and livelihood insecurity first and foremost, alongside exposure to health issues stemming from absent or insufficient WASH infrastructure and public service provision, as well as broader issues of crime, violence and socio-political marginalisation.

While these were common challenges across the study sites, the environmental and political characteristics of each community also produced some differences in narratives of respondents in each area. For example, communities were affected by different types of hazards as a consequence of their settlement location, density and topography (e.g. landslides versus flooding). Nuances highlighting the spatiality of in discussions about livelihoods, with respondents (especially women) living in the more remote locations of Laguerta and Lower Mahiga, recounting particular difficulties in accessing or sustaining income generating activities, more so than in centrally located communities, because of the distance and cost of travelling to the city centre. Relatedly, although female respondents were generally better educated than male respondents, women described facing specific challenges and forms of age-based discrimination which limited their livelihood opportunities in both the formal and informal economy. The risks emanating from infrastructural inadequacies also differed slightly between communities, with drainage and sanitation issues most acute in Sitio Aroma and Alaska, and potable water provision most variable in Laguerta and at the CICC. However in all areas, my analysis suggests that is the financial and human capital of women more than men which is affected by the absence of basic infrastructure, reinforcing WASH services as a critical dimension of gender inclusive urban planning and risk management (see also Chant and McIlwaine, 2016). Collectively, these findings reinforce the value of adopting intersectional approaches to thinking about urban risk, which focus on the perspectives and experiences of affected populations in knowledge production processes.

My findings on the importance of everyday risk mirror those of Cannon and Müller-Mahn (2010: 625), whose NGO respondents recounted a general absence of ‘disasters’ in discussions about risk at a community level, and the higher priority awarded ‘to problems like illness, water supply, security, unemployment or traffic accidents.’ Floods, fires, and landslides also featured prominently in respondent testimonies, the unpredictable, dangerous and damaging nature of fires causing the greatest levels of concern in all communities, with the threat of landslides prompting similar levels of worry (to fires) among affected individuals in Laguerta and Lower Mahiga. However although such hazards qualify within the realm of popular conceptualisations of disasters, in the majority of cases, their occurrence pass unnoticed by those outside the settlements, and garner little if any attention, support, or resources from the state despite their significance and adverse implications for the local community.

Interestingly the term ‘disaster’ only really featured in respondent narratives in the preliminary focus group discussions, when after a lengthy discussion about local risks, I asked participants what the term disaster<sup>42</sup> meant to them and whether they had ever experienced one. In the ensuing conversations, perceptions of disaster were intimately tied to personal experiences of fear, trauma and loss, as summarised by a male respondent from Alaska: ‘I connect disaster with fatalities, loss of lives, loss of livelihoods, loss of properties and loss of opportunities. So disaster is about loss’. Many respondents referred to back to stories they had shared earlier about their experiences of fires and/or landslides that destroyed their homes. Talk of ‘disaster’ also elicited memories of other events, such as a flash flood in Laguerta that killed a local woman who had been doing laundry by the river, as well as typhoons Ondoy and Yolanda, and the recent (2013) earthquake in neighbouring Bohol, whose tremors were felt in Cebu. The inclusion of these latter three events in respondents’ narratives of disaster, seemed to be influenced in part by national and international framings of these events as such. I say this because bar a few exceptions, (thankfully) most of their accounts were as temporary evacuees and/or peripheral witnesses to the catastrophe that ensued in other parts of the country, rather than as direct victims of these events themselves.

Also particularly illuminating was the attribution of ‘disasters’ to either deistic or natural forces, through statements such as: ‘it is a punishment from God’ or ‘[i]t is only God who knows what will happen. It [disaster] comes from God and it is in the Bible’ (female,

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<sup>42</sup> Here I used the English term ‘disaster’ alongside the Cebuano terms ‘*kalamidad*’ and ‘*katalagman*’ denoting calamity, catastrophe, danger and disaster, to prompt discussion (see Appendix B).

Laguerta). In another such discussion, typhoons were said to 'come from the sea', while flooding was said to be 'human-induced as well because people cut down trees and throw garbage everywhere. But with earthquakes, it is God' (female, Zone 3). As discussed in Chapter 2, the incorporation of the divine into interpretations of climatic and environmental phenomena is a common practice across the archipelago (Bankoff, 2004; Chester and Duncan, 2010; Gaillard, 2008), especially among central Visayans who are known in the Philippines for the strength of their Roman Catholic convictions. However, given that only moments before, respondents had engaged in a critical discussion about socio-structural and political drivers of risk and vulnerability with no mention of celestial forces, the shift in perspective elicited through the introduction of the term 'disaster' is notable.

Respondents equally appeared to share the perspective that 'disasters' necessitated individual vigilance, planning and preparedness, as articulated by a female participant from Laguerta: 'Before a disaster happens you should be prepared... I make preparations for typhoons for example by preparing food, gathering canned goods, and such things but this is not enough to protect us.' Such comments also reflect a slightly different stance from preceding discussions about 'risks', where much of the accountability for managing and responding to these issues was ascribed to the local government, or attributed to community members' behaviours, intimating a more collective responsibility. This need for households and communities to organise themselves and take the initiative in DRRM activities was linked to the absence of state support and reiterated throughout the duration of my field work (see also Chapters 5 and 6): 'during disasters such as landslides or typhoons, when we call the barangay for help they say, "no, we cannot come there because our rescue team is somewhere else." We are not the priority. So that is why we made our own rescue to people affected by disasters.'

Interestingly, gendered perspectives differed in discussions around who (if anyone) in the community was most vulnerable to risks and disasters. Where women tended to associate conditions of vulnerability with social attributes such as age or having a disability, male perceptions of vulnerability tended to be more oriented around material drivers of risk such as the quality and location of housing and/or absent infrastructure. Some female respondents felt that women were more affected by (disaster) risks than men, or 'worry more than men', owing to their responsibility for household affairs and the security of their children. However, as one female respondent from Laguerta poignantly remarked: 'men are more secretive with their feelings and don't tell their emotions because they don't want to worry their wives. They only tell it after the storm that they felt the same. They have a poker face'. Not only do these observations reaffirm distinctive gendered differences in

perceptions of risk and vulnerability (Bartlett et al., 2009; Bradshaw, 2013; Enarson, 2012; Satterfield, Mertz, and Slovic, 2004; Slovic, 1999), but they also reflect the ongoing technocratic (masculine) focus that continues to dominate priorities across much of the Philippine (and global) DRRM sector.<sup>43</sup>

It appears that the term ‘disaster’ denotes a degree of unpredictable devastation; hence the attribution of such events to ‘Acts of God’. Furthermore, as highlighted by Hulme (2009) the connection between people and the natural environment is often purposefully understated to facilitate particular agendas of development and environmental pilfering, the use of the term ‘natural’ adjacent to ‘disaster’ thereby erasing the historical and social dimensions of vulnerability and the production of risk. On this basis, I contend that endorsing and propagating a language of ‘disaster’ over ‘risk’, which inadvertently frames these happenings as unforeseeable, unpreventable and exceptional, serves to depoliticise debates on risk and vulnerability. It also simultaneously (and problematically) places the onus on individuals, more than governments it would seem, to be prepared for the unexpected, and to assume responsibility for response and recovery in the aftermath of such events, in addition to the existing circumstance of precarity that characterise their everyday.

#### **4.6.2 Conclusion**

When evaluated collectively, the respondent testimonies presented in this chapter highlight the subjective and gendered experiences of risk, and the various ways in which gendered identities, disadvantages and distributions of labour exacerbate actual and perceived vulnerability. Despite national trends that indicate higher levels of female educational attainment and literacy and a feminised labour force, among the urban poor, many women are excluded from many formal and informal employment opportunities, confining them (more than men) to the domestic sphere and to working ‘*sideline*’ jobs from their homes alongside their responsibilities for the lion’s share of unpaid reproductive duties. Gendered mobilities as an extension of gendered roles and identities that consign women (more than men) to ‘the domestic’, seem a reasonable explanation for the particular concern expressed by female respondents’ for issues affecting this realm, including land tenure, waste management, and settlement-specific health and safety risks. Similarly, male

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<sup>43</sup> The vulnerability and relative invisibility of the elderly, and especially of elderly female carers, which, though not the focus of this study, became apparent over the course of fieldwork, is also an important finding with policy and practice implications relevant to DRRM and urban development agendas more broadly.

preoccupations tended towards their gendered designation as breadwinner, and infrastructural constraints that affect their livelihoods. Women's anxieties about land tenure and demolition may also be partially attributed to their heightened sense of economic insecurity and financial dependency, as discussed above. In any case, as I argue in Chapter 6, gendered differences in perceptions of and encounters with risk appear to be critical determinants informing participation in risk management activities, as well as the types of issues that are acknowledged and considered within DRRM.

A second theme to emerge from my analysis is the ways in which the risks identified by informal settlers are intricately connected with one another, their hybrid nature making it difficult to accurately attribute causation to a single source. As this chapter has shown, financial and livelihood insecurity often stem from various classed, gendered and gerontological disadvantages in assets, education and wider opportunities that reflect generational cycles of impoverishment and inequality. In the absence of a steady and sufficient income stream, people are relegated to living in hazardous structures and environments, exposing residents to other risks connected, for example, with absent or inaccessible basic infrastructure and public services, minimal (or excessive) policing, and as I discuss in Chapter 5, stigmatisation and overt political neglect. In the context of the latter, access to infrastructure such as roads and public transportation, in turn affects not only the day-to-day mobility of individuals and their capacity to evacuate in times of emergency, but also their livelihoods and income-generating potential.

In a similar vein, insufficient WASH services impose particular constraints on women's human and financial capital, and also exacerbate the frequency and embodied impacts of hazards such as floods and landslides. These multifaceted dynamics portrayed by respondents in this and subsequent chapters, complicate designations of risks and disasters as being either environmental or human-induced. Moreover, both local governments and private stakeholders such as commercial property developers are contributing to the production of risks and vulnerability in urban informal settlements. Acute examples of this discussed thus far include the purchasing of a resettlement lot in an innately hazardous environment, as seen in the case of Laguerta, failures to provide basic infrastructure and amenities and the purported clientelist approaches to public service provision, not to mention the ongoing issue of state-endorsed extra-legal violence directly targeting the urban poor.

Identifying and understanding the linkages between everyday and exceptional risks is fundamental to ensuring that DRRM interventions serve the needs of those most affected

(Varley, 1994: 2). As this chapter has demonstrated, feminist political ecology provides a useful lens for analysing how access to assets such as land, housing, public infrastructure and human capital, as well as (re)productive labours, interact to produce distinct yet interconnected (inter alia) gendered, classed and gerontological riskscapes. Complementing the work of Nightingale (2011: 153) who highlights the significance of material processes in the production of subjectivities and nature-society relationships, my analysis has revealed the social, material and spatial dimensions of urban risk, identifying exclusions from public services, land tenure and housing security as central to the subjective embodiments of risk and disaster among the urban poor. Respondent testimonies show that these exclusions are often predicated on gender class and other markers of social inequality such as migrant status, level of education, and livelihood, which shape power relations of access to and control over resources, including as I discuss in Chapter 5, access to political capital.

These findings reinforce the validity of Moser's (2001: 364) assertions pertaining to the relationship between economic, social and political forms of insecurity, and the need to approach them collectively rather than in isolation. Given that, as my findings indicate, the propensity to differentiate between natural and human-induced risks remains central to constructions of disaster in popular discourse, incorporating everyday realities into considerations of exceptional events also helps to disrupt objectivist techno-scientific preoccupations with catastrophic risk. Indeed, as Rusczyk (2017: 131), argues, a 'focus on the everyday promotes the necessity to consider ordinary people'; a process that in itself serves to re-politicise the discussion by making visible the experiences of those most exposed to hazards, yet typically excluded from policy conversations. Similarly, it also encourages a more intersectional reading of risk and vulnerability, which moves beyond essentialist stereotypes and recognises the existence of multiple subjectivities that simultaneously affect how people interpret, interact with and are impacted by their environment at any given moment.

As I explore in Chapter 6, understanding, or at a minimum, having an awareness of gender-related vulnerabilities and subjective experiences of housing and financial insecurity, responsibilities of care, health issues and violence inter alia, is crucial when it comes to developing and appraising community-based risk management initiatives in urban poor communities. Herein, considering the 'everyday' in evaluations of the 'exceptional' holds valuable potential as a practical methodology for integrating a gendered perspective into analyses of participation, (disaster) risk, and urban development, as a focus on the everyday draws attention to existing power hierarchies that might otherwise go

unnoticed or are all too often subsumed into classifications of 'community' or participants. It also reveals the embodied activities that contest and reconfigure power hierarchies at different scales, and which transform the natural environment itself. Before delving into these dynamics in the context of urban poor homeowner associations, the following chapter contextualises the broader political economy of risk governance and urban development within which these organisations are operating.

## **5 Development and disaster: the political economy of risk and urban development in Metro Cebu**

As I showed in the previous chapter, perceptions of, and encounters with, everyday risks among urban informal settlers are predicated on recurrent cycles of economic and livelihood insecurity interacting with other forms of social, material and political disadvantage. This contention also naturally extends to the seeming vulnerability of urban poor communities to disasters, traditionally conceptualised as either natural or human-induced. However as long argued by many critical disaster scholars (Hewitt, 1983, 1997; Wisner et al., 2004; 2012), the propensity to distinguish between environmental and anthropogenic risks is misleading in that it fails to account for the complex and intrinsically political processes that see risks and vulnerability concentrated in some areas more than others, and disproportionately experienced by certain groups. Moreover, such framings obscure the complicity of external actors and forces within these dynamics and the wider implications of these interactions on the geographies in which they emerge.

With this in mind, the present chapter explores the politics of (disaster) risk in informal settlements of Metro Cebu. Its objectives are two-fold, the first being to draw attention to the ways in which electoral politics and urban development interventions impact 'riskscapes' in informal settlements, again emphasising the importance of everyday over exceptional risk in the lives of the urban poor. Secondly, it examines how risk and efforts to govern risk are reconfiguring the socio-spatial terrain of the city itself. As I demonstrate, these points are not mutually exclusive, but rather, are intimately connected through exclusionary politics that delineate urban poor populations and spaces as risky, illegal and undesirable. I open with a case study on the micropolitics of road infrastructure and waste collection in the Laguerta study site, a state-owned relocation site for households evicted from danger zones. Complementing the analysis of risk hybridity outlined in the previous chapter, the case of road infrastructure, though specific to Laguerta (Lower Mahiga to a lesser extent) speaks to many of the broader points relayed by respondents in all five communities about the impacts of local electoral politics on public service provision and broader urban governance processes in informal settlements. Given that Laguerta is a resettlement site, this particular case also offers insight into the politics of risk and informality that transcend cycles and spaces of land tenure insecurity.

I proceed with an analysis of how (disaster) risk management narratives and associated interventions are shaping urban development, interrogating the logic driving these initiatives and their socio-spatial implications for informal settlers. Here, I consider

the Mega Cebu project; a mega-urbanisation plan launched in 2011 by big business to encourage public-private partnerships and improve collaboration on planning and infrastructure development across (and beyond) Metro Cebu's 13 towns and municipalities. Specifically, I evaluate the ways in which temporal visions of resilience, sustainability and associated technologies of DRRM are entangled in modernising aspirations, arguing that these urban imaginaries are mobilised and justified through a discourse regime premised around risk, vulnerability, and benevolence, with informal settlements as the focal point. Analysing the contradictions inherent to framings of certain bodies and spaces as being 'of risk' or 'at risk', I also contend that the epistemologies of modernity, disaster risk and resilience endorsed and propagated by the state are facilitating processes of displacement and dispossession that serve elite commercial interests under the auspices of 'disaster resilience' and 'pro-poor development'.

Although class (more than gender, as in previous and subsequent chapters) features as the central analytical category framing these discussions, my findings draw attention to the inherently technocratic and masculinist nature of DRRM and urban development initiatives, wherein local strongmen operate through the state and powerful private corporations to advance their personal interests and agendas, while the poor, and especially poor women are left to cope with the everyday experiences of insecurity and privation exacerbated by their actions. I conclude with an ethnographic vignette that encompasses the politics of risk, displacement and urban development being interrogated in this chapter, setting the scene for the ensuing analysis of informal settlers' political engagement within this terrain, and the gendered politics of participation in risk management activities.

## ***5.1 Hybrid threats and absent infrastructure***

### ***5.1.1 Risky resettlement: the case of Laguerta***

It is a slightly overcast, February morning and I am standing outside Annie's bakery at the busy junction in front of JY Mall. As I wait for Renil and Wilbert, the two community organisers from FORGE who will be accompanying me on my first visit to meet with residents of Upper Laguerta, a *habal-habal* driver approaches me to ask where I am going and if I need a lift. I mention my intended destination and tell him that when the people I am waiting for arrive, he can count on my business. Five minutes later, as he skilfully navigates the slippery boulders and muddy tracts of unpaved road that offers the only means of accessing this hillside settlement, he enquires about the purpose of my visit there and wonders whether I am a missionary. When I tell him that I am a student doing research, he asks if I have anyone meeting me, and before I can answer, proceeds to warn me that the

area is dangerous, full of *malditas*,<sup>44</sup> and that I should take care and watch my belongings. I thank him for his concern and reassure him that several residents are expecting us. As we approach the entrance of the community marked by the local basketball court (see Figure 3.4), I take in my surroundings; a few *sari-sari* shops dotted along the main square and adjacent road, a group of young men standing next to their motorcycles, casually smoking and chatting, and a *carinderia* to the right of me with a couple of plastic tables and chairs outside, one sporting a fast-paced early morning *tongits*<sup>45</sup> game that has attracted a small audience of men, women and children. The arrival of a foreigner does not go unnoticed by the occupants of the square who stop to look at me, some with a smile, others simply offering a curious glance in my direction. I thank the driver as I pass him the 20 pesos (USD 40 cents) fare, and follow Renil and Wilbert through a narrow path of houses opposite the *habal-habal* drop-off point, which turns left into a steep ascent into the hills. After a sweaty and heart-pumping five minute climb, we eventually arrive at the community chapel.

Over the course of my seven months of fieldwork, I repeated this journey several times a week, usually in the company of my interpreter, Regina, who despite being a Filipina (albeit from Luzon) was often thought to be a foreigner. Likely a consequence of our gender and obvious (or in her case perceived) foreignness, similar warnings about crime and *malditas* from concerned drivers continued until our presence at the *habal-habal* stand became so commonplace that they no longer asked where we were going. Contrary to the warnings heeded, the only perilous part of these visits for both Regina and I were the *habal-habal* journeys and steep descents by foot, which on a dry day were arduous though manageable, but during or after a heavy downpour became anxious escapades; so much so that before venturing to or from Laguerta, I would find myself tentatively watching the sky, looking for signs of rain and willing the clouds away.

The majority of the residents I came to know in Laguerta migrated to the sitio some ten to twelve years ago after being evicted from their homes in the downtown reclamation area. The land on which they currently reside is one of several relocation sites purchased by the Cebu City government for informal settlers, under a scheme wherein households use their relocation assistance as a down payment for their lot and reimburse the remaining debt via monthly instalments over a ten year period. Faced with few other options, the possibility of eventually owning land helped some warm to the idea of moving from their

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<sup>44</sup> A term generally used to denote negative qualities in a person, which include being mischievous, lacking discipline and/or having malicious intentions.

<sup>45</sup> A popular local card game.

previous central location near the sea to the hills along the periphery of the city. However conditions on arrival proved more challenging than even they had expected. As recounted to me by 42 year old, mother of five, Janet:

'I have been living in Laguerta for eight years but moved... because our house was demolished. It was a government lot and they told us they were going to use the lot so we had to transfer here. We really didn't have [a] choice but to move here and stay here. It was very difficult for us because we had to walk very long distances. Before when we first stayed here, we had lots of problems. There was no water, no electricity, a lot of trash... We were very scared to be here... When we first moved here, we would go to the river to wash clothes and take a bath and we would go to the spring to get water for drinking. It took me around four years to feel comfortable here. One factor was that before, we would have to walk through the river because there were no roads. So if there was a flood or overflowing of the river, we would have to get a rope to guide us in the river. Even motorcycles would go through the river, but not in the rainy season. It was really normal for them to have accidents. I myself have experienced that twice, usually because the motorcycle hits a rock and goes off balance.'

In the several years that have passed since Janet's family (who were among the first residents) was relocated, incessant lobbying for infrastructural improvements eventually resulted in water and electricity connections in 2012/2013, although the quality and quantity of water remains problematic (see Box 5.1). However at the time of my initial visit to the community in February 2016, the main roads connecting residents to the city and to each other remained unpaved and in very poor condition (see Figure 5.1), despite the original request for concreting dating back as far as 2010.



#### *Box 5.1 Water*

'[This] picture is about water. Right now we don't have any water at all. When we first settled here we were a small population so we had a continuous flow of water supplied to us in 2012. But... last year, they started to schedule [regulate] the water supply because the population is higher. Right now our main supplier of water is Spider and the problem with them is that our supply is not continuous although we are paying them a lot of money already. Spider is a private water supplier and they are charging us even though they are not providing the service. We tried to talk with them and asked "how come we are paying the same amount as for continuous flow of water but you have already given us a schedule where we will not receive water between certain hours?" They just told us, "well, if you are not ok with that we will just cut your connection". So we just pay and don't comment.'

Source: Interview with Manuel, TAHAS, 2016.

Source: Photograph by Manuel, TAHAS, 2016.

Figure 5.1 Dirt roads on the steep slopes of Laguerta



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

From my very first meeting with the residents of Laguerta, it was clear that I was not alone in my *habal-habal*- and road-related anxieties. Men and women spoke to me at length about the challenges they faced as a consequence of the steep topography and ongoing deficiencies in basic infrastructure provision, with the absence of paved roads repeatedly identified as a one of the main risks affecting residents, especially the men. No longer having the diversity of livelihood options that had been available to them in the downtown port area, many now worked as *habal-habal* drivers which was the only means of motorised transport into or out of Laguerta and seen to be one of the few local income-generating options for men with limited education and vocational training. In addition to hampering their ability to work, the condition of the roads also exacerbated their overall sense of vulnerability. According to Nelson (35), who moved to Laguerta in 2011:

'The roads are very bad here. My motorcycle cannot make it through the mud. Access to the hospital is also a major issue. There is no transportation to get there because there are no roads so you cannot travel there. If you are sick and have to go to the hospital, there is a fifty-fifty chance that you will die.'

For Artemio (70), a retired security guard suffering from arthritis and consequently reliant on a cane to help him move around: 'Leaving to go outside by motorcycle is very hard and

makes me feel stressed. I have already crashed twice.’ Thanks to the help of his two sons who lived with him and worked in the city, Artemio’s need to travel outside for food and other essentials was less pressing. However in 2017, he suffered a stroke, which in combination with the uneven topography and unpaved roads, left him confined to his home for the final months of his life (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Artemio sitting in his living room (left) and with his son (right)



Source: Author’s photograph, 2016.

Women’s livelihoods were, not unsurprisingly, also affected by the state of the roads. Although the majority of female respondents from this area were unemployed, those who were working had set up *carinderias* or *sari-sari* shops, both of which require access to markets in the city and thus also depend on *habal-habals* for their operation. Sally who had recently taken out a loan to set up a *carinderia* from her house to support her family of eight, told me how in the heavy rains, her husband was unable to drive his motorcycle to pick up supplies, leaving them without any food or income, sometimes for days on end. The high cost of transportation to and from the city also means that a large proportion of residents’ already stretched incomes is spent on travel, diverting money away from food, clothing, school supplies and from their monthly lot repayments as described by Manuel in the previous chapter. In fact only two of the sixteen people I interviewed in Laguerta were still paying their monthly dues, the majority having stopped within six to twelve months of

moving there, accruing years of unpaid interest penalties. This made their eventual ownership of the lot unlikely and left them in a perpetual state of fear that they might be evicted.

The absence of paved roads and affordable public transportation links in Laguerta have clear implications for residents' encounters with everyday risks. Road conditions affect their mobility and income generation potential, simultaneously affecting food security, human capital reserves, and ability to save and pay-off their debts on the land. Residents are also forced to contend with the heightened risk of personal injury from road accidents or violent attacks on their journeys to and from home (see Chapter 4), not to mention constrained access to healthcare and emergency services, making them all the more vulnerable during crisis events, including landslides, floods, fires and typhoons. It is therefore of little surprise that road conditions were unanimously identified among the most pressing 'risks' affecting residents in this community.<sup>46</sup> Health and environmental risks stemming from improper solid waste management are also exacerbated by the state of the roads, as government utility vehicles are only able to reach the base of the community, requiring families, most notably female members, to carry household waste down the hill to the trucks.

Describing her frustration with waste collection in the sitio, Bebe who moved to Laguerta in 2006 explained:

'...the trucks can't really come up here so they ring the bell for us so that we know that they are there, so we need to go down and carry our garbage down to them. But by the time that we reach the bottom they have already gone off, they don't wait for us to reach them... [W]hat is difficult for us is that, OK, so we have segregated the garbage and are taking it down to the truck, but the truck is not there waiting for us. That is why I just burn my garbage... even though we know it is bad for the ozone layer and has environmental effects, because if... we are left with the garbage here in our area, it is just going to be like a dumpsite. So instead we burn it.'

After trekking into the valley only to find that the trucks have gone, most residents leave their bags of refuse near the road entrance until the next collection. In the interim, materials often wind up in the nearby river (see Figure 5.3), blocking the flow of water and in turn contributing to floods, outbreaks of dengue and waterborne diseases as discussed in Chapter 4.

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<sup>46</sup> Road infrastructure and access to public transportation was also identified as a pressing issue in Lower Mahiga, which like Laguerta, is located on the periphery of the city (see Chapter 3).

*Figure 5.3 The river which runs through the valley of Laguerta, adjacent to the main road and community square*



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

Intimately connected with gendered labour and patterns of mobility, these testimonies from Laguerta reveal embodiments of differential risk emerging from infrastructural inequalities (Farmer, 2004), and the consequences of absent infrastructures on the everyday practices of the urban poor. Reinforcing my analysis in the previous chapter, respondents' accounts of these embodiments also highlight how environmental, material and social conditions are co-constituted and intersect to produce unequal riskscapes. Moving beyond the usual appraisals of access and control (see Truelove, 2011), their narratives serve as a useful entry point for deconstructing the anonymity and seeming neutrality that often shrouds the 'structural' or 'technical' discussions that dominate masculinist conceptualisations of risk and DRRM interventions. Rather, the relational dimensions of risk and vulnerability are brought to the fore, shifting the conversation to one of accountability and inclusive development that is attentive to social hierarchies including (but not limited to) class and gender (Ferguson, 2012) and how these intersect with the materialities of physical landscapes, ecological processes and infrastructural access.

As the following section reveals, infrastructure provision and urban development in Metro Cebu are highly influenced by electoral politics; dynamics that are also crucial in contextualising grassroots responses and strategies of resistance to be evaluated in Chapter

6. Adapting Farmer's (2004: 308) notion of the 'materiality of the social'<sup>47</sup>, my objective here is to unpack the 'materiality of the political', drawing attention to the micropolitics of structural violence afflicting urban poor informal settlers, and specifically the material and spatial embodiments of risks that are produced and reinforced through sustained infrastructural and political neglect. In Laguerta as in other informal settlements, the micropolitics of structural violence associated with infrastructural inequalities, relating to roads and transportation, water, sanitation, or waste (see below) materialise in (gendered) riskscapes of adverse health from road accidents, diarrhoea, dengue and other waterborne illnesses as well as income, food and land tenure insecurity, not to mention the pejorative stereotypes ascribed to the urban poor.

## ***5.2 Politics and public service provision: a disaster in the making***

### ***5.2.1 Local 'strongmen' and party politics in Cebu City***

Waste management is a pervasive issue in Metro Cebu, and as is the case in many cities, informal settlements frequently find themselves at the heart of these discussions. Akin to Bebe's account, the majority of respondents were aware that their actions and behaviours concerning waste disposal are contributing to the production of risks in their community. However a more notable theme to emerge in conversations about risk causality was the lack of political accountability and repercussions of electoral favouritism on public service provision. This first materialised in the preliminary focus groups in Laguerta, where male and female participants voiced suspicions that residents of the area had been labelled as supporters of the opposition party at the time (*Bando Osmeña Pundok Kauswagan* (BOPK) [Group for the Advancement of Team Osmeña]) and that this was why the Rama administration, (in power from 2010-2016 and at the time of this discussion, also the party of the local barangay captain) refused to sign off on the road concreting project, despite a budget already ring-fenced for this work. This charge emanates from the entrenched 'bossism'<sup>48</sup> that characterises Philippine politics (see Sidel, 1997, 1999), and specifically the

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<sup>47</sup> For Farmer (2004: 308), this term serves as a prompt for ethnographic researchers interested in structural violence, to keep 'the material in focus', based on his 'conviction that social life in general and structural violence in particular will not be understood without a deeply materialist approach to whatever surfaces in the participant-observer's field of vision—the ethnographically visible... The adverse outcomes associated with structural violence— death, injury, illness, subjugation, stigmatisation, and even psychological terror—come to have their "final common pathway" in the material.'

<sup>48</sup> Bossism as defined by Sidel (1997: 952) refers to 'the prevalence of local power brokers who achieve sustained monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources within given territorial jurisdictions or bailiwicks.'

feud between Mike Rama and Tomas Osmeña which continues to divide many Cebuanos along partisan lines.

From the inception of his political career, Mike Rama had been a longstanding member of the BOPK and an ally of Tommy Osmeña,<sup>49</sup> serving as vice-mayor for the administration from 2001 to 2010. Seen by some as an act of defiance, in the subsequent elections, Rama declined Osmeña's supposed suggestion to run as congressman of the city's south district (Borromeo, 2010), opting instead to run for the position of mayor which he successfully won, defeating the opposition's Alvin Garcia,<sup>50</sup> who had himself previously served as mayor from 1995-2001. Interpreted perhaps as an act of defiance and attempt to deepen his personal stronghold in the city, tensions grew between Rama and Osmeña, culminating in 2011, when according to a local newspaper, a group of informal settlers supported by the Pagtambayayong Foundation 'and some BOPK allies sued Rama in court over the alleged indiscriminate demolition of houses along the danger area of the Mahiga Creek', prompting Rama to officially cut ties with BOPK (Pareja, 2011). In light of this history, although respondents in Laguerta (and other communities) never mentioned it explicitly, their assumed political leanings were likely attributable to their affiliation with FORGE, who, although politically neutral, work closely with Pagtambayayong given their shared interest in championing issues affecting the urban poor.

Both FORGE and Pagtambayayong have established relationships with the Osmeña administration, the latter's co-founder and executive director Francisco (better known as 'Bimbo') Fernandez being a long-time ally of Tommy Osmeña, and an increasingly prominent actor in local politics. Fernandez, an urban poor leader from Cebu City who became nationally renowned for his advocacy work in this sector, has in recent years served as Commissioner of the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) and as Undersecretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). Some rumoured that his DILG appointment was an act of compensation for his allegiance to the Osmeñas (Cebu Daily News, 2012a) who maintain a position of influence in Visayan and national politics (Sidel, 1997: 955). As further evidence of their close ties, in the 2016

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<sup>49</sup> Tomas Osmeña served as mayor of Cebu City from 1988 to 1995 and from 2001 to 2010 and was re-elected in the recent 2016 elections. The family have a long history in politics dating back to the early 1900s and extending into the establishment of the first Filipino-led government in which Sergio Osmeña served as Vice President, succeeding Quezon as President in 1944 (see Mojares, 1993 and Sidel, 1997 on the multigenerational political dynasty of the Osmeña family).

<sup>50</sup> Notably, Alvin Garcia had himself previously been a member of the BOPK, but severed ties with the Osmeñas in the late 1990s, leading him to form KUSUG, the only opposition party at that time in Cebu City, and remaining so until Mike Rama's subsequent decision to set up his own party in 2011.

mayoral elections that saw Rama ousted after two consecutive terms,<sup>51</sup> Fernandez was appointed Executive Assistant to the Mayor on all matters concerning the urban poor. Residents' speculations of bias appear to have been well-founded, as after more than six years of lobbying the government, some three months after Tommy was (re)elected as mayor, road concreting in Laguerta commenced (see Figure 5.4).

*Figure 5.4 Eventual success! Road concreting in Laguerta*



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

Similar stories of partisan politics disrupting site development and negotiations between the city and informal settlers were recounted in numerous conversations throughout my fieldwork. One such discussion was with Alaska resident Rico, who lived in a state-owned Slum Improvement and Resettlement (SIR) area, a slum upgrading programme initiated by Marcos in the 1970s, which, similar to Laguerta, included a proviso for occupants to buy the land from the state. When the 25 year repayment period ended in

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<sup>51</sup> Rama is still contesting the validity of the election results and has demanded a recount of the ballots (though little evidence of electoral fraud has been substantiated to date) and has since been embroiled in allegations of drug use and protecting a well-known drug dealer, which he claims are being driven by Osmeña and his allies to delegitimise him.

2010, many residents had not paid off their land costs, so they negotiated a ten-year extension to the term. Although the ordinance was passed (the year Rama took office), it was never implemented, leaving SIR residents without a system for repayment. Between 2010 and 2016, efforts to get this rectified had little effect. However Rico was confident that with Osmeña back in office it would soon be addressed:

‘the previous administration is hostile to us because we are identified to another political party. We are identified as Osmeña allies... because FORGE... is identified Osmeña ally so they [Rama] don’t entertain us. The Division for the Welfare of the Urban Poor [DWUP], the government agency that oversees the SIR projects, in the past administration they are only roaming in the area, but for the political purposes... If they [Rama] win the election, they said that they will give it [a land title]. But how come you are given a title when you are not fully paid...? Impossible. But other beneficiaries... believe that but for a person like me, no, it is nonsense.’

Echoing the tale of road construction in Laguerta, Rico’s testimony also alludes to the common tactics deployed by politicians and the urban poor alike of strategically timing projects and negotiations around campaign periods to further their respective interests.

### ***5.2.2 Social housing and site development***

The influence of local electoral politics on the rights and recourse of the urban poor operates similarly at the scale of the barangay, Laguerta again standing as a case in point. Officially, the relocation site falls under the jurisdiction of barangay Busay, however in the absence of a clearly defined border, some of the residents have registered with neighbouring barangay Lahug. According to respondents, this ambiguity over which barangay is responsible for the settlement, and the associated fact that barangay captains in both areas cannot guarantee the electoral support of the sitio’s residents, gives politicians little incentive to invest in and develop the space. Frustrated by the absence of basic infrastructure and government inaction, Manuel remarked:

‘Lahug and Busay local government units are always quarrelling on who will be accountable for this sitio. There is no guidance from the government on how to solve this problem because there is no political will. My solution is that Laguerta sitio should be a new barangay, because right now we cannot avail of any help for projects from the government.’

In my own conversations with Yody Sanchez, the chairman of Busay, who previously served several terms as barangay captain over his 28 year career, (and, as previously mentioned, is affiliated with Team Rama), Laguerta was recognised as being within the barangay. Interestingly, Sanchez cited the newly initiated (at the time) road construction as an example of the barangay’s investment in the sitio, describing it to me as:

'... a city government project during the time of Mike Rama. Mike Rama signed off the amount, I think 4 or 5 million [pesos] during his time, but because they implement it today, the present administration will pay. So that is an example of our participation [in the development of the area].'

Waste collection also falls under the jurisdiction of the barangay, although when asked about these services in Laguerta, he told me:

'... we come in on the small roads. The barangay takes a small truck, a mini dump truck and we collect there. But you know in Laguerta, the people there will not go down. The people there are lazy and throw their garbage. They are very lazy. Once they saw the garbage truck already they will not go down, they will just wait until they are going down, going to school and they will just leave it there in the roads. Even if they will see the garbage truck is coming in, and because they are very lazy to go down to throw the garbage. So they have to wait and take their garbage once they are going down for school or church or other things. They will not make a special trip to throw the garbage. So that is a problem for us.'

Finding his comments questionable given my own knowledge of women's judicious efforts to dispose of household waste, and eager to challenge his classification of Laguerta residents as 'lazy' without being too overt about my personal opinions, I asked how the dump trucks entered the area in the absence of roads. Sanchez acknowledged this as 'a problem' affecting the reach of waste collection services in the area, and promptly proceeded to change the subject by telling me about the efficiency and 'very nice schedule' of waste collection other parts of the barangay, such as near their office. Gauging from these and earlier remarks where he described the resettlement site as notorious for guns, *shabu*, and residents 'quarrel[ing] ... and shoot[ing] each other', over and above partisan politics, pejorative stereotypes of the urban poor as 'lazy', criminal and subsequently undeserving may also be fuelling the barangay's neglect of Laguerta residents.

Many questions remain as to what the government was thinking in purchasing a site where the natural topography lends itself to landslides and makes day-to-day mobility both difficult and expensive for residents. The unfathomability of this act is all the more so when households are relocated because they are living in 'danger zones', and then moved into an equally if not more precarious set of circumstances. Moreover, the absence of basic services and protracted bureaucracy associated with site development is not unique to Laguerta, but rather typical of relocation sites across Metro Cebu. I observed this first hand when I accompanied a team of government workers on site visits to different resettlement communities. In a newly purchased relocation area to the northwest of the city, forests and were being cleared to make way for roads and housing lots (see Figure 5.5) procured through the Community Mortgage Programme (CMP), a mortgage financing scheme endorsed in Republic Act (RA) 7279, the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA),

wherein legally established urban poor homeowner associations are able to collectively borrow funds to purchase land and pay for housing and site development. Premised around the principle of incrementalism, the CMP is implemented in phases based on the financial circumstances of the beneficiaries involved, the first stage being lot acquisition, followed by site development and then home improvements. Loans are repaid with six percent interest<sup>52</sup> in monthly amortisations over a maximum 25 year period (Ballesteros et al., 2017). Consequently, infrastructure including roads, water and electricity are predicated on community affordability rather than government intervention, leaving the most impoverished without basic amenities. Payment defaults are also met with a two percent surcharge, and after two consecutive months of non-payment, the association (who remains responsible for ensuring repayments) is legally entitled to evict the household and replace it with other eligible tenants.

*Figure 5.5 House construction in a resettlement site on the outskirts of Cebu City*



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

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<sup>52</sup> Commercial interest rates in the Philippines typically range from 18 to 30 percent.

In this community, the quality of the houses being constructed alone suggests that these occupants are much better-off financially than most of those resettled in Laguerta. Monthly amortisations for the CMP's package loan (financing all stages) is in the region of 1800 pesos (USD 36). This is more than double the 500-700 pesos (USD 10-14) that proved beyond the affordability of most residents I came to know in Laguerta. Site development in older and more central relocation sites, CMP-financed or otherwise, was notably more advanced, though residents here also recounted similar stories of waiting years for basic amenities. These findings appear to contravene the stipulations in Section 21 and 29 of UDHA, stating that 'The local government unit, in coordination with the National Housing Authority, shall provide relocation or resettlement sites with basic services and facilities and access to employment and livelihood opportunities sufficient to meet the basic needs of the affected families' with basic services and facilities including '(a) Potable water; (b) Power and electricity and an adequate power distribution system; (c) Sewerage facilities and an efficient and adequate solid waste disposal system; and (d) Access to primary roads and transportation facilities'.

Describing the challenges of site development, Mandaue City's Housing and Urban Development Office (HUDO) head, Tony Pet Juanico, told me that many individuals facing eviction from danger zones refuse the option of relocation:

'...because they want that the relocation site should be fully developed once they are there, and we cannot do that. We are not a magician, like that we can make this a kingdom, like a paradise for them. The site development is ongoing and the development is not abrupt, so we should do it by phase, the bureaucratic process of processing the programme of works and estimates, and it will take time, the processing itself takes time. So that is one of the challenges. So instead of the relocation site, they will chose to accept the financial assistance. And what is ironic about this decision, is that once they found out that the area are already developed, they will go back and lobby that they are now ready to accept the relocation site, but it cannot be. They can only choose one of the two, relocation or financial assistance.'

When I asked whether undeveloped meant no running water and no electricity, he replied:

'Yes, but in our case, in Mandaue City, we always abide by the provision stated in RA7279 of the basic services that they have like water, electricity, transportation. So as you can see our relocation site [6.5] is within the city so we are obliged to follow what is in the provision of the law. That when we relocate people there should be water, electricity and transportation. Easy for them to go to their working area, near the school. These are all in the law.'

On an independent visit to Mandaue City's flagship 6.5 resettlement area (its name derived from the 6.5 hectare size of the lot), which first opened in 2012 to house 1200 households evicted from 'danger zones' along the Mahiga creek, I observed a mix of finished

and partially constructed double story CMP houses (see Figure 5.6), alongside light material 'temporary' structures housing those whose could only afford the loan for the land. Some of these 'temporary' houses were dotted along the water's edge, falling short of the three metre easement building regulations. When I asked about this, I was told by a neighbouring resident and local (female) community organiser that these were the homes of the 'caretakers of the land' who had resided on the lot prior to its acquisition in 2010 for development as a relocation site. 'Actually, before their houses where not here, but in the middle of the land, but then they were affected with the development [of the relocation site] so they had to move here [by the creek].' She proceeded to tell me that in heavy rains, the area is flooded by the nearby Butuanon River, noting that:

'... this area is full of mangroves before. I want to know how come the Department for the Environment and Natural Resources allowed that, because there is already an ordinance or policy to save or preserve the mangroves. But they can then landfill the mangroves? And on the other side, where there is a fish farm [near the main access road], that area was also all mangroves. The fish farm lot is privately owned but the city government is the one who landfilled the area. Underneath all this area, maybe you can still see mangroves. Before it was owned by the Cortes family [extended family of the ex-mayor and current congressman].'

Further afield were a couple of public toilets shared by those who lacked private facilities, and a partially completed access road (construction started in 2013), connecting the estimated 600 households currently residing there to the main avenue.

*Figure 5.6 Housing in Mandaue City's 6.5 resettlement area*



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

Notwithstanding the slow pace of site development, the alleged circumnavigation of environmental protection zoning, or the paradox of urban poor settlers being displaced (to 'danger zones') in order to make way for households being relocated from other 'danger zones' in the city, the 6.5 relocation site stands out as an example of better practice when compared to Laguerta, marking a hopeful shift in perspective and approach for the better. Phoebe ('Bebot') Sanchez, a local activist, community organiser and academic who has been researching the CMP for many years, is less optimistic. Defining the CMP as a social housing programme pitched as uplifting the poor from poverty that instead criminalises them (when they are unable to maintain payments), she recounted her personal concerns about the

programme. These include the inability for residents to extend their house without authorisation from the government or association and the restrictions around transference whereby if a beneficiary dies, the next beneficiary (even in the same household) has to start the repayments from scratch. Most unsettling is the stipulation that all households have to pay-off their lots before individual land titles will be issued. She also told me that she observed, first-hand, urban poor households who had completed all their payments being issued replicas of transfer certificate titles. Instead of being officiated by the Bureau of Lands, they had been signed by Tomas Osmeña:

'I told them that this is not even an original title. They told me "we paid", and I said "how did you pay?" And they paid directly to the city government, to the city treasurer's office. So that is really questionable... [these titles] are not legitimating the space. They are actually legitimising the mayors. Because it is politics. How he [Tomas] actually made the people believe in him so that the people would vote for him... [Because] as long as the mayor is there, there is assurance that you can stay there. That is the whole point.'

Another local activist and academic present during our conversation, Aloy Cañete (47) recalled when he and other urban poor advocates lobbied Osmeña to pass a city ordinance officiating the provision of financial assistance to disaster victims:

'We were telling them, "Mayor why don't we create an ordinance so that there is an official allocation by the city government?" But the mayor would say, "No. You just go to my office and then they will write the cheque." So it is actually very patronage. Because there is actually money from the city government [for this within municipal DRRM budgets]'

Bebot elaborated:

'This is what is called the calamity fund... funded by the national government. But the greater calamity that people experience every day is poverty. That is the greater Yolanda, the super typhoon, and that's poverty. I lived in the community for 12 years and saw that there are no amenities that are really good. Like sewage. So all the garbage from the different high [class] communities, they actually end up in the small communities that are slum infested. For example if you go into the area of Basak Mambaling where there are actually the poorest community that we have here... the native Bajau. You will find that the drainage is actually at their end. ... [Y]ou will find electro-plating machines are also dumped in the canal [from private industries]. [A]ll those... [middle and high] class... communities have all of their drainage end up in these [poor] areas. So... the canals are choked so when it floods, it really floods... I don't understand how the engineering department has not done anything about that one. They just sit there and... have never planned anything about what to do with the streets... And the urban poor communities, what is problematic is... every time it rains and floods, it reaches their bed, the floor of their shanties built between the structures [along the creeks of the city].'

Aloy aptly summed-up these dynamics as 'environmental racism. That you know, industrial areas, are actually located where the ghettos are. It is actually part of the planning. The high

end housing projects are up there and the poor are down there [and get blamed for the conditions].’ His evocation of American sociologist Robert Bullard’s monumental work (see for example Bullard, 1993, 1994) documenting the influence of racism on exposure to health and environmental risks in the United States, denotes a degree of intentionality embedded in the violent ‘materiality of the political’ associated with infrastructural inequalities and everyday risk in Cebu. Although the language that emerged in several of the conversations I had with various public officials seemed to corroborate this supposition of bias culminating in the political neglect of urban poor communities, some of their testimonies also indicate feelings of frustration, as depicted to some extent in Juanico’s remarks about site development. These dilemmas often revolved around the challenges of meeting the needs of informal settlers amidst limited resources and extensive bureaucratic processes, while also adhering to political dictates from the mayor’s office, suggesting a degree of dissonance between the actions of state actors and their personal politics.

### ***5.2.3 The costs imposed by partisan politics on urban governance***

While the natural topography and peripheral location of Laguerta makes mobility and transportation-related challenges particularly marked in this community (and Lower Mahiga to a lesser extent), as discussed in the Chapter 4, infrastructural issues were a point of concern across all settlements, especially in terms of waste management, flooding and environmental contamination. Whether on state-owned or privately-owned lots, most households lack personal latrines, and public WASH facilities, where present, are insufficient to meet the needs of residents, resulting in the practice of open defecation and *flying saucers*<sup>53</sup> in many areas. Unsurprisingly, this further complicates the willingness of city workers to collect refuse from informal settlements, with obvious adverse consequences for local residents.

Marifel (39), who during my fieldwork secured part-time work as an Environmental Protection Officer monitoring waste disposal and collection practices in her local area, told me that limited public resources coupled with political rivalries are fuelling inefficiencies in public service provision. Her barangay, Mambaling, which houses a high proportion of the

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<sup>53</sup> A colloquial term used to describe a method of disposing of human waste employed by some who lack access to toilet facilities, which involves plastic bags of faeces being flung indiscriminately into the air.

city's urban poor as well as the Inayawan landfill,<sup>54</sup> has become notorious for its waste management issues (Cebu Daily News, 2012b; Fernandez, 2017). Describing a photograph she took of her team of garbage loaders (see Figure 5.7) and the empathy she had for them given their meagre daily salary of 90 pesos (USD 1.80) for five hours of work beginning at 4am:

'They are paid from the barangay, but supposedly they are supposed to have a counterpart from the City Hall to help them do their job, but the barangay is not on good terms with the current mayor. Our barangay captain is team Rama and so when there is a project from Mayor Tommy none of these projects are supported by our barangay.'

Marifel proceeded to give other examples of how political divisions and corruption play out in public service provision, telling me how workers in the barangay are routinely moved between departments (or committees) to prevent them from noticing or speaking up as higher-up officials siphon-off funds:

'I don't know why they do this, it is political... Because when the City Hall gives the barangay funding for the different committees, for example sports, or garbage disposal and management, so what they do, the barangay captain would ask the committee head to sign to release the funds, but if I don't like to sign, he will just transfer me to a different committee and find someone else who will sign. Like these guys that I am working with, for example, three of them are part of the original team that have been there for two years, and the others have been replaced...'

Allegations of corruption also extend to the provision of free medicines to families in need, where, according to Marifel, City Hall distributes medicines to the local barangays but in areas such as hers, where the barangay captain is not allied with the mayor, they:

'...don't want to distribute the medicines to the people here in the barangay because it is coming from Osmeña. So what they do, they keep these medicines and use it only for their family, for their friends or for their close acquaintances... I heard from neighbours that they went to the barangay to ask for the medicine but they were not given any. But eventually if these medicines are about to expire, that is the time that the barangay people will go house to house to ask people who needs these medicines... It is very ideal to have the barangay captains and councillors from one team, either all from Team Rama or all from Team Osmeña, but this is not the case here so that is why they are always quarrelling.'

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<sup>54</sup> This landfill, which for years was the main receptacle for solid waste in the city, was closed in 2015 by Rama owing to its failure to comply with environmental, health and safety regulations. It was temporarily reopened in 2016 by Osmeña in the interest of cost-saving, owing to high dumping and transportation fees of the private landfill in the city of Consolacion.

*Figure 5.7 Municipal garbage collectors sorting through local waste*



Source: Photograph by Marifel, 2016.

Similar stories were recounted time and time again, not only by informal settlers, but also by several government workers. While political rivalries were most notable in Cebu City, it is relatively common practice across the Philippines for newly-elected administrations to cull public sector workers where allegiance to the opposition is suspected. If this is not possible because of administrative boundaries, whole organisations may be excluded from participating in local governance. As an example of this, at the height of the Rama and Osmeña tensions, the local branch of the nationally funded and governed PCUP, which under BOPK rule had been the main agency dealing with municipal urban poor issues, was side-lined by the hitherto smaller city-run (and financed) DWUP. Municipal funds and activities were channelled through DWUP and their staff allegedly told to keep their distance from PCUP, curtailing the scale and coordination of urban poor interventions. PCUP continued working independently from DWUP, and when Osmeña took office again in 2016, DWUP employees loyal to Rama were replaced and the partnership between DWUP and the PCUP resumed.

When it comes to government departments responsible for DRRM and emergency response, the consequences of these electoral changeovers are especially worrying. I

witnessed this personally when on a return field visit, I went looking for individuals I had met in the Cebu City DRRM office (DRRMO) during the Rama administration, only to find that following the election, all but one of them had been sacked or transferred. The remaining individual, a government employee for 19 years, shared his frustrations:

'It is very difficult now. Before, I had 60 staff in the quick [rapid] response team, who I had been training for six years. Now this is cut to 30. The mayor is concerned with climate change, but we have no resources. Our equipment such as ambulances have been taken away for inventory purposes and maintenance to check their functionality since May and we still have no sight of them being returned.<sup>55</sup> We received a memorandum that we had to return our vehicles after the election, so we did and the next day there was an incident in the rural areas but I did not even have a vehicle to respond. So I had to call an ambulance just to take me over there so that we could respond. It was a drowning incident. By the time we got there, the person was dead. I complained to the mayor after this so I now have my vehicle back. I am so frustrated and really feel as though my hands are tied... Even though the city has invested all this money in training highly skilled staff, there is no security. I am not worried about myself, but I am worried for our people [of Cebu City]. A disaster can come at any time and we do not have the staff to respond. The population of the city is now between 800,000 and 1 million. Also the barangay elections are coming up in October so the same thing that has happened to us will happen again [in the barangays when new officials are elected]. Every time a new mayor comes in, bang, back to zero, bang, go back to zero again. The government is wasting money just because he wants to have his people with him. And this is a premier city [sarcastic undertone].'

Believing that he was only kept on because of his permanent employment status and to ensure some transfer of expertise, this government worker expected to be replaced in the near future by Osmeña's 'own people' as he put it. He also told me that in the post-election cull, he was the only remaining government representative on the city's DRRM council, which meets quarterly and includes representatives from relevant government departments and NGOs. In such contexts, when years of hard work and personal investment are suspended, sometimes instantly, on the back of municipal elections, it is easy to understand the depths of political loyalties and resentments evident across Metro Cebu. Nonetheless, the prospects for Cebu City's ability to respond should a major disaster strike in the immediate aftermath of electoral reorganisations are somewhat bleak, with especially worrying consequences for those living in 'danger zones'; mostly notably urban poor informal settlers.

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<sup>55</sup> According to some of the Team Rama barangay captains I met with, similar recalls were also happening with garbage trucks and other vehicles issued by City Hall. Those who refused to return the vehicles were being sued by the city (see Braga and Demecillo, 2016).

Collectively, these testimonies from residents and government workers offer a brief glimpse into the complex landscape of neo-patrimonial and masculinist politics shaping urban governance in Metro Cebu (see Sanchez, 2016 for a detailed analysis of contemporary local politics). These dynamics are sustained by pervasive ‘bossism’ wherein local strongmen who have ‘captured the state apparatus’ use it to entrench themselves in the local political economy, advancing their personal agendas ‘largely unconstrained by “any set of organised social interests”’ (Sidel, 1997: 962, citing Evans, 1989: 562;). In saying that, the narratives of government employees also remind us that the state is not a harmonious monolithic entity, but rather is composed of multiple actors with different (and sometimes competing) backgrounds, interests and positionalities whose practices simultaneously reproduce and resists social hierarchies and power relations. Indeed, as depicted above by the DRRM officer, those working from within the state are also adversely affected by municipal party politics, disrupting binary framings of state-society relations, and revealing another dimension of the ‘materiality of the political’.

Matters of public service provision and accountability prove especially challenging when issues transcend administrative and geography boundaries. This is especially so given the need to coordinate across 13 different municipalities, each of which have differing degrees of political and administrative power, with Cebu City being at the top of the pyramid in terms of population, financial, and political clout, followed by the other two ‘highly-urbanised’ cities of Mandaue City and Lapu-Lapu. On the back of this detailed examination of how micropolitics influence the production and management of everyday risks in informal settlements, the following section considers how these configurations of risk and vulnerability are being (re)produced through urban development and DRRM programmes. Orienting my analysis around the Mega Cebu project, I pay particular attention to the contradictory logics and discursive framings underpinning proposed interventions and their socio-spatial implications for the urban poor.

### ***5.3 Urban imaginaries of risk and modernity***

#### ***5.3.1 Mega Cebu 2050: envisaging a sustainable and resilient urban future***

On the first day of April, 2011, urban development in Metro Cebu took a momentous turn with the launch of Mega Cebu. This mega-urbanisation plan started off as a conceptual venture, spearheaded by prominent business owners who felt a more integrated approach to urban planning and development was necessary to encourage future investment and harness the city’s full potential as a global economic hub. Their vision of making Cebu a ‘competitive, sustainable and liveable’ city by 2050 (JICA, 2013) through market-oriented

development projects was rapidly endorsed by local and regional government heads, as well as allies in the private sector, culminating in the signing on 1 April, 2011 of a Memorandum of Agreement. This essentially officiated the Metro Cebu Development and Coordinating Board (MCDCCB) as the new authority on urban planning and development in the region, with the advancement of Mega Cebu as a principal mandate. The Mega Cebu masterplan that has since evolved has four strategic pillars (Competitiveness, Mobility, Liveability and Metropolitan Management), each of which is premised around major infrastructure projects coordinated by the MCDCCB. Central to these plans is an appeal for a more collaborative approach to DRRM and CCA. This is one of ten key areas of cooperation (see Box 5.2) singled out alongside related matters including flood control, solid waste management and environmental management, among other issues identified as priority areas by the MCDCCB.

From its inception through to the present day, efforts to engage the public in the vision of Mega Cebu have been rooted in a conceptual architecture premised around the

*Box 5.2: MCDCCB Areas of Cooperation*

1. Urban and land use planning and zoning
2. Transport and traffic management
3. Pollution control and solid waste management
4. Flood control, drainage and sewerage management
5. Urban renewal and shelter provision
6. Health and sanitation
7. Public safety
8. Road improvement and infrastructure development
9. Coastal resources, watershed, and environmental management
10. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

Source: <https://megacebu2050.wordpress.com/what-is-mcdccb/> (accessed 16 January, 2018)

power of believing in a better tomorrow and the potential to surpass challenges of the present through unity, hard work and perseverance. These narratives are exemplified in the cover statement of the 2015 Mega Cebu Annual Report (MCDCCB, 2016: 2):

‘It is no secret that Mega Cebu started with a dream. That dream embraces the strong desire for a livable and sustainable Cebu, one that can be considered our legacy for the future generations. When we continue to exert effort, focus and work hard, imagine the ripples and waves we can contribute to the quality of life. Then we can be certain that a livable and sustainable Cebu is truly possible.’

and again in the opening message of the report by Chairman of the MDCB, Governor Davide (ibid.: 3):

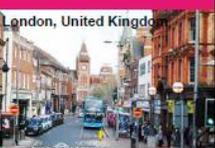
‘We envision Cebu to be among the greatest places in the world. Defining the future of Metro Cebu... require[s] the active participation and benevolence of the people behind Mega Cebu. We realize that cohesive partnership between the public and private sectors is the only way to create a competitive and sustainable Mega Cebu... There are still a lot to be done and the challenges are many but with our collaborative work, we are confident that we are on our way to achieve our dreams. One day, these steps will lead us to where we want Cebu to be – a progressive and happy place to live.’

A vision fortified by projections of a more ‘liveable’ and ‘sustainable’ city, Mega Cebu positions the metropole as an ‘exemplary centre’ of Philippine modernism and resilience; a term used by Kusno (2010: 90) in reference to ‘the spectacle of order and development’ embodied through city-making practices in Jakarta. The above excerpts also highlight the ‘worlding aspirations’ (see Ong, 2011; Roy, 2011a,b; Wang and Oakes, 2015) inherent to the vision of Mega Cebu, promoted as a progressive project with the potential to make Cebu a city of global significance. Here, worlding can be seen to constitute an assemblage of undefined performative practices that collectively strive to establish Cebu as an ‘exemplary centre’ within the global economy, wherein both the processes of ‘worlding’ and evocations of the ‘exemplary’ rely on reproductions of the city as a spectacle. As I demonstrate below, this ‘aspirational urbanism’ (Wang and Oakes, 2015) profoundly affects how risk is considered, managed and obscured by different (elite) stakeholders implicated in the city’s development plan.

In a 2013 publication entitled ‘Mega Cebu Vision 2050’ (authored by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency) summarising the ‘sustainable development vision’ for the metropole, the visionary ‘attributes’ of this Cebu of the future are exemplified by a short descriptive text accompanied by pictures of the city adjacent to images intended to showcase these desirable attributes in Yokohama, Japan, alongside other so called ‘leading cities’ including Kyoto, Singapore, London, Boston and Paris among others (see Figure 5.8). This display reflects efforts to conjure Ghertner’s (2011: 281) notion of ‘a world-class aesthetic’, which he argues ‘takes shape through the dissemination of a compelling vision of the future... and the cultivation of a popular desire for such a future’ normatively presented around a ‘clean, comfortable, and “nuisance-free”’ imaginary (Ghertner, 2015: 184). Similar to Kusno (2010), Ghertner (2011: 280, 2015) describes how this ‘world-class’ spectacle enables ‘an aesthetic mode of governing’ that facilitates and legitimises plans for ‘world-class’ city-making. In the context of Mega Cebu, the global aesthetic and its associated big infrastructure projects, are pitched alongside the possibility of making Cebu ‘wholesome,

advanced, vibrant, equitable and sustainable', depicted in the catch phrase 'Making W.A.V.E.S'.

Figure 5.8: The Mega Cebu 2050 Vision: A Leading Global City

<p><b>MEGA CEBU 2050 VISION STATEMENT:</b>          “A vibrant, equitable, sustainable and competitive environment that embraces Cebu’s creativity and its cultural, historical and natural resources, with strong citizen participation and responsive governance.”</p>			<p><b>CATCH PHRASE:</b>          “MEGA CEBU - MAKING W.A.V.E.S          (Wholesome, Advanced, Vibrant, Equitable, Sustainable)”</p>		
<p><b>CULTURAL &amp; HISTORIC:</b></p> <p>The fusion of a vibrant and sustainable environment that embraces Cebu’s cultural, historical and natural heritage, with a sense of identity and belonging</p>	<p><b>INNOVATIVE, CREATIVE &amp; COMPETITIVE:</b></p> <p>A proactive, adaptive, effective and quality educational system and globally competitive business environment that maximizes key economic drivers and livelihood opportunities</p>	<p><b>INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE &amp; LIVABLE:</b></p> <p>A developed, responsive and efficient physical and social infrastructure that provides safe, secure and healthy living environment for all members of society</p>	<p><b>INTERCONNECTED &amp; COMPACT:</b></p> <p>Physically, economically and socially integrated Metro Cebu communities where individual growth areas are compact and walkable</p>	<p><b>GREEN:</b></p> <p>Sustainable and Resilient development that preserves and nurtures the unique national environment</p>	<p><b>INTEGRATED, COORDINATED &amp; PARTICIPATIVE:</b></p> <p>A strong citizen’s participation and collaboration together with responsive and accountable governance that identifies, plans, and delivers integrated solutions</p>
<p>Cebu, Philippines</p> 					
<p>Yokohama, Japan</p> 					
<p><b>Other Leading Cities</b></p> <p>Kyoto, Japan</p> 	<p>Singapore</p> 	<p>London, United Kingdom</p> 	<p>Boston, USA</p> 	<p>Tokyo, Japan</p> 	<p>Penang, Malaysia</p> 
<p>Chicago, USA</p> 	<p>Paris, France</p> 	<p>London, United Kingdom</p> 	<p>Vienna, Austria</p> 	<p>Dusseldorf, Germany</p> 	<p>Maputo, Mozambique</p> 

Source: JICA (2013: 4–5).

With reference to situated experimentations in ‘the art of being global’, Ong (2011: 4) frames ‘[s]uch discursive and non-discursive activities’ as ‘spatializing practices that drive the flow of distinctive urban codes that gives the region a buoyant sense of being on the cusp of an urban revolution.’ These practices, she argues, are often mobilised through a neoliberal logic ‘that articulates particular assemblages of governing... to recast problems as non-ideological and non-political issues that need technical solutions to maximize intended outcomes’ (ibid.; see also Ong, 2006). Urbanisation in the Philippines has, in its recent history, been profoundly shaped by neoliberal processes and logics, gaining particular momentum during the post-Marcos years of neoliberal restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s, when devolution of power from the central state to local governments was rapidly pursued and promoted as a transition away from authoritarianism towards democratisation.<sup>56</sup> In Metro Cebu, decentralisation and liberalisation prompted a surge in foreign investments, fuelling economic growth in a period that become known colloquially as ‘the Ceboom’ (Ortega, 2012: 50). Political decentralisation and investment-fuelled growth continue to characterise urban governance and development in the metropole, with the Mactan Export Processing Zone, the Singapore style IT Business Park and the more recent commercial and real estate developments of South Road Properties (SRP) standing as material evidence of the city’s market-oriented development paradigm. In this light, the urban trajectories (and, as I discuss below, risk governance strategies) embraced by Mega Cebu can be seen as a continuation rather than break in the logic that has informed city-making in the Metro area for some time now (ibid.).

Indications of a neoliberal bias underpinning the Mega Cebu urban development plan have been apparent since the launch of the MDCDCB in 2011. While claiming representation from local government, the private sector and civil society, engagement of the latter has been limited at best. The MDCDCB is led by the Cebu Provincial Governor and co-chaired by the Cebu City Mayor at the time, Mike Rama (who throughout his two terms in office was unreservedly neoliberal and pro-business (Bersales, 2013), alongside the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation (RAFI) as the paradoxical double representative of the private sector and civil society. As the philanthropic arm of business conglomerate Aboitiz Equity Ventures, owned and operated by the Aboitiz clan who are one of the most prominent and powerful families in the Philippines (and key masterminds of Mega Cebu), the extent to which RAFI constitutes an impartial and ‘representative’ voice advocating for the interests

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<sup>56</sup> The actual materialisation of this purported outcome remains widely debated (see Shatkin, 2000; Yilmaz and Venugopal, 2013).

of wider civil society in Cebu is questionable. The predisposition of the MCDCB to advancing the interests of the city's business elites by prioritising private-sector growth<sup>57</sup> is further solidified by the number of local government heads constituting much of the remainder of the board, many of whom (as is the case with politicians across the Philippines) are themselves from families of wealthy, powerful business moguls. This administrative arrangement lends itself to elite capture (Yilmaz and Venugopal, 2013), with decentralisation in this context serving the personal interests of the upper-class and narrowing rather than expanding opportunities for the urban poor to participate directly in local politics (Hutchison, 2007). According to Shatkin (2007: 8), globalisation has also played a key role in the 'empowerment of elite economic actors at the expense of community groups', given the tendency of such processes and networks to privilege economic growth and corporate investment over redistributive programmes that prioritise and address local needs. Indeed, risk, or more accurately risk governance, has an important discursive and material function in the enactment and potential attainment of these worlding ambitions in Metro Cebu.

Mindful of the socio-spatial implications of these processes, in 2015, a group of civil society organisations representing urban poor interests (including FORGE) came together out of concern for the absence of their voices in Mega Cebu coordinating bodies. However, though the extent to which their suggestions have been heeded remain to be seen. Since Rama was ousted by Osmeña in May 2016, the mega-urbanisation project has met a wall of resistance from the new Mayor of Cebu City who, shortly after being elected, announced that Cebu City would no longer be participating in the flagship project of his predecessor (Felicita, 2016) and refused the offer of Governor Davide (2013-present) to head the MCDCB (Demecillo, 2016). With Cebu City at the geographic, financial and logistic heart of the metropolis, Osmeña's disinterest leaves both the MCDCB and their 30 year masterplan in an uncertain position. Nonetheless, the urban imaginary evoked by Mega Cebu has been deeply etched in the psyche of many Cebuanos and in many ways continues to shape the

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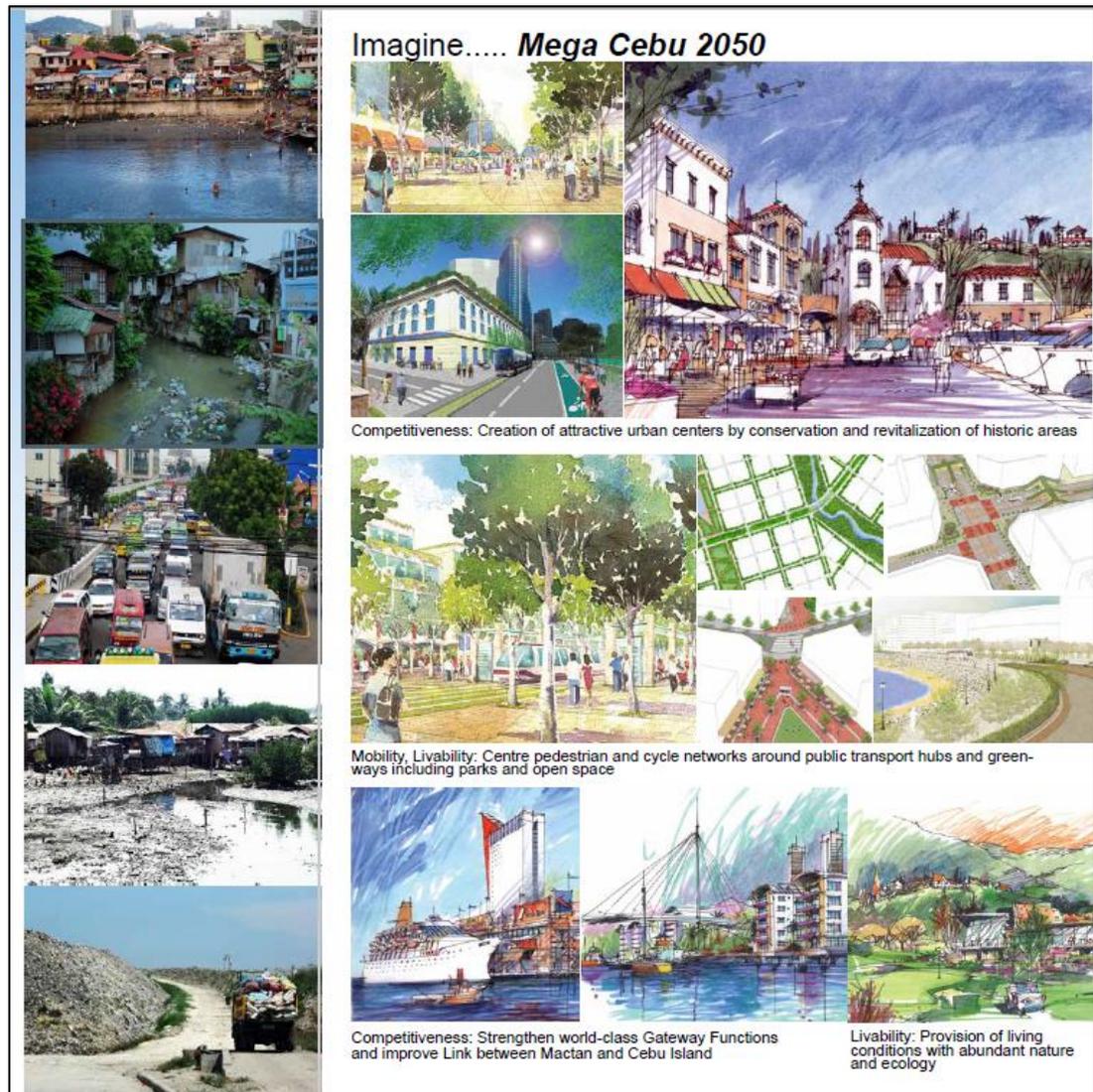
<sup>57</sup> Technical innovation through public-private cooperation' is emphasised and presented as the 'solution' to sustainable urban development, omitting the specifics as to how this partnership is envisaged or any mention of local government accountabilities in public service provision (ALMEC Corporation Oriental Consultants Global Co., 2015: ES-2-4). Other technical means of achieving sustainability and resilience championed by Mega Cebu include, inter alia, a mass transit network incorporating a Bus Rapid Transit system (a favourite in international policy circles), as well as road widening, dam and bridge construction and improved wastewater treatment facilities (ibid.), all of which notably offer huge revenue prospects for potential investors and contractors.

trajectory of urban transformations in the city. Below, I evaluate how urban risk considerations are embedded in the conceptual and material practices being championed by the masterplan. I reveal links between risk management and the operationalisation of market-oriented ideals of efficiency, growth and privatisation that simultaneously reinforce the stigmatisation and exclusion of those seen to be hindering the making of Cebu into a 'world-class' city; the urban poor. My intention here is not to suggest that it is unusual or surprising for objectives of sustainability and disaster resilience to overlap with modernising ambitions, but rather to draw attention to the manner in which they are connected and mobilised through a language of risk.

### ***5.3.2 Urban risk as a 'crisis of modern futurity'***

Central to the discourse and imaginaries produced and propagated by Mega Cebu is the potential for the city to 'progress' towards a more desirable future. This perspective rests on an understanding of the present condition as something which is undesirable or 'backwards' when pitted against modern, worlding standards. The challenges of rapid urbanisation and population growth in the wake of the city's topographic and geographic constraints, and the need to govern in anticipation of the unknown impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, are all central to this discursive regime. These ideas are strategically deployed to project a particular vision of the city's current state and its potentially bleak future so as to elicit popular support for the proposed solutions. In the same Mega Cebu Vision 2050 publication discussed above, dystopic images of informal settlements, congested streets and an overflowing landfill are pitted against utopic watercolour images, prompting the reader to 'imagine Mega Cebu 2050'; a Cebu, it would seem, without poverty, traffic, garbage and their associated (negative) externalities (see Figure 5.9). The pictorial depictions of the Cebu of today as chaotic, polluted, overpopulated and inherently risky, situate urban poor communities at the heart of many of these problems, or at the very least, as emblematic of them, 'equating slum-related nuisances with slums themselves' (Ghertner, 2008, 2011: 287). Informal settlements are the focal point of three of five photos, insinuating their vulnerability-cum-culpability in terms of flooding, coastline and environment degradation and broader issues of disaster management, invariably earmarking the urban poor as subject both 'of' and 'at' risk.

Figure 5.9: The urban imaginary of Mega Cebu as depicted in a Mega Cebu flyer



Source: JICA (2013: 2-3)

Following a similar logic, the previously referenced Roadmap Study for Sustainable Urban Development explicitly constructs the city's notorious drainage issues as a problem emanating from 'the presence of informal settlements and irresponsible private property owners along the riverbanks, disposing an enormous amount of garbage that obstructs the flow of natural and man-made waterways' (ALMEC Corporation Oriental Consultants Global Co., 2015: 12). This framing again insinuates that urban poor communities are to blame for these problems afflicting the city, neglecting to acknowledge how political dynamics described in the first part of this chapter pertaining to absent infrastructure, sporadic and fragmented solid waste collection, and siloed approaches to urban planning, are implicated in the production of flood (and other) risks. The report also identifies a concern among local government officials 'for rapid population increase and informal settlements, economic

development and the environment' (ibid.); another moralistic statement, premised around Malthusian classifications of the poor as sexually irresponsible and blaming them for rapid population growth (and its associated pressures) in the city.

As mentioned, DRRM considerations also feature within Mega Cebu's masterplan for building a globally competitive, 'sustainable and resilient' city-region. The MCDCB report includes a hazard analysis of the proposed mega zone, and maps hazardous areas on the basis of their slope, metres below sea-level, and history of flooding and landslides. It concludes that 76 percent of land in the study area is 'considered hazardous and not suitable for urban development', approximately 1.6 percent of which was in a currently urbanised area, with 10.9 percent of the land (11,948 ha) surveyed being neither hazardous nor urbanised, making it suitable for future urbanisation (ALMEC Corporation Oriental Consultants Global Co., 2015: 7). Preceding this section, a diagram outlining the disaster risk assessment procedure is also included in the report, which broadens the scope of hazards beyond typhoons and floods to include fires, earthquakes and social vulnerability. The inclusion of the latter category in particular suggests an attentiveness to the subjective and socially constructed nature of disasters (Wisner et al., 2004, 2012). However few if any concrete plans are subsequently offered for addressing issues of social vulnerability or the associated socio-spatial distribution of disasters in the city. Rather, in line with Ong's (2011: 4) assertions, technocratic solutions dominate the narrative, with flood mitigation through water drainage infrastructure attracting much of the focus, seemingly ignorant of the numerous critiques highlighting the limitations of such approaches premised around environmentally-deterministic definitions of disasters (ibid.; see also Cardona, 2003; Israel and Sachs, 2013; McEntire, 2004) .

According to the report, 35,217 informal settler families (ISFs) were living in Metro Cebu in 2015 (ALMEC Corporation Oriental Consultants Global Co., 2015: 4). This statement, followed by a table summarising 'Poverty Incidence in Cebu Province, Region VII and the Philippines', is in fact the only section of the Roadmap Study specifically allotted to 'Poverty and Informal Settler Families', despite their centrality to many of the proposed development projects. One such project entails a spatial reorganisation of the city through an urban cluster system, premised around the strict enforcement of land-use and zoning regulations, 'the designation of city limits on hilly slopes so as to form less hazardous urban spaces free from landslides and floods', and the creation of a Green Loop establishing an urban boundary which 'should promote more attractive urban functions' therein, though it fails to elaborate on what is considered more versus less attractive (ibid.: ES-3, 24). These efforts to 'promote functional, safe and environmentally friendly urban areas' (ibid.: ES-3),

are presented as desirable and beneficial for all Cebu's residents, however in reality, they are likely to have profound implication on the lives, livelihoods and mobility of the urban poor.

As noted by Zeiderman (2016: 3), Foucauldian appraisals of 'modern society' situate risk at the heart of the transition to liberalism. 'For autonomous responsible individuals' to be empowered to make rational choices in accordance with liberal political and economic principles, 'they had to envision their future as containing dangers that could potentially be avoided.' This 'calculative rationality' became central to the logic underpinning modern governance (ibid.). Zeiderman goes on to describe how the ensuing 'prosperity gained through unequal and exploitative relations of power and exchange enabled modern cities both to manage risk and to project a definitive vision of the global future' (ibid.: 4-5). Referencing the work of Rosenberg and Harding (2005: 4) who speak of a 'crisis of modern futurity', Zeiderman (ibid.) identifies the 'imperative to govern the present in anticipation of future harm' as a central tenet of this 'crisis', and one which he argues 'is actively reconfiguring the politics of cities' around the world, including in Colombia where his research is focused. In Cebu, I argue that a 'crisis of modern futurity' is being promulgated by Mega Cebu through the deliberate use of discourse and imagery to conjure a sense of risk in the present, with informal settlements positioned at the heart of this 'crisis' to justify their removal from the city (Ramalho, 2019). The socio-spatial and material ramifications of this logic for urban poor communities are discussed below.

## ***5.4 Risk as a technology of urban governance***

### ***5.4.1 Dispossession through DRRM***

Though not specifically outlined in the proposed Mega Cebu development plans, the clearance of informal settlements from waterways and coastlines has become a core feature of the material embodiment of DRRM policy in Metro Cebu. Demolitions of this nature have been ongoing for some time, promoted as a necessary initiative to protect vulnerable communities from exposure to hydro-meteorological hazards while simultaneously removing the structures (namely people's houses) and garbage, seen to be inhibiting water flow and causing creeks to flood (Cebu Daily News, 2013). In 2013, the Cebu City government began a major programme of flood management under the Rama administration entitled the Reduction of Danger Zones project focusing on the five major rivers in the city, led by an implementing body aptly named the 'Prevention, Restoration, Order, Beautification and Enhancement Office'. The Mahiga Creek, spanning Cebu City and Mandaue City, was one of the first to be surveyed and subject to a series of major works with

a stated aim of preventing the ‘overflowing of the river and likewise to avoid illegal settlers in the area’ (Demecillo, 2016: no page).

Over the course of my fieldwork in 2016 and 2017, 357 of the 714 families residing on the Mandaue City side of the creek had their homes forcefully demolished by HUDO, with plans in place to evict the remaining households in 2018 (see Figure 5.10). A programme of work is also underway to rehabilitate the Butuanon River, considered one of the most polluted rivers in the country, which will require clearing the 753 ISFs estimated to be living within its three metre easement area, and proposes building parks, walking paths, a commercial strip and mid-rise housing nearby (Mendoza, 2017). Notably, all of the 3,912 ISFs identified by HUDO as ‘living along danger zones’ in Mandaue City have acquired this classification because of their proximity to waterways, with no mention of those living in landslide, earthquake or fire prone areas. This was reconfirmed in an interview with HUDO head, Juanico:

‘Our priorities [at HUDO] right now are those informal settlers currently occupying the danger zones in our creeks, because they are exposed in danger, their life and limb are exposed in danger, considering our weather conditions. So as we all know, climate change is very overwhelming in our country, not just in our country, but I think in the whole world... So, I think that is our priorities right now. So, that is why our clearing operation is ongoing.’

Throughout our many conversations together, it was clear that Juanico struggled with the forced demolitions carried out under his command, sensitive to the many hardships and challenges faced by informal settlers. Framing informal settlers as being ‘in danger’ for their lives seemed to offer a sense of legitimacy to this aspect of his work, presenting HUDO as a saviour and protector of the people. This call to action is given added urgency when ‘dangers’ are positioned alongside the unstoppable forces (and threats) of climate change with women and children routinely identified among the most vulnerable to disasters, another problematic discursive framing (see Chapter 2).

Figure 5.10: Mahiga Creek demolitions



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

These trends are not unique to Cebu. In her insightful investigation of disaster-induced evictions in Pasig City in Metro Manila, Alvarez (2018) notes similar flood-focused preoccupations, not only in terms of the municipality's flagship mega infrastructure projects, but also in the haphazard delineation of risk and danger zones to target urban poor communities living near or along waterways and to legitimise their eviction from these spaces. Tellingly, she traces the origins of the term 'danger zone' to the previously referenced UDHA (RA7279), which associates these areas with territories of poverty and urban marginality, stating that 'eviction or demolition as a practice shall be discouraged', except under circumstances where people are found to be 'occupy[ing] danger areas such as *esteros* [creeks or tributaries], railroad tracks, garbage dumps, river banks, shorelines, waterways, and other public places such as sidewalks, roads, parks, and playgrounds' (ibid.: 116-7). In the 'Operational Guidelines in the Transfer of Informal Settler Families from Danger Areas in the National Capital Region' published in 2014, this list was expanded to include areas under transmission lines, on fault lines, or prone to soil erosion 'and other similar areas not suitable for housing'.

Oddly, despite the prolific adoption of the term ‘danger zone’ within DRRM, sector-specific legislation and related texts have neglected to move beyond a list of examples to offer a more substantive definition. Consequently, Alvarez (2018: 118) argues that:

‘When used particularly in the context of flood disasters, ‘danger zones’ are based on a specific use of space, rather than flood susceptibility. Ignoring official flood hazard maps, while defining danger zones according to a law on eviction and demolition, did not only retroactively authorize the widespread pockets of evictions in waterway communities... [but] it also legitimated the state’s eviction drive under the ISF Housing Program. The acts of legally defining the danger zone, and of demarcating the areas which are danger zones, were collapsed into a matter of slum eviction by default.’

Building on Ghertner’s notion of ‘worlding aesthetics’, she contends that the ‘territorialisation of disaster risk’ to slums in Manila is being produced through an aesthetic governmentality premised around the stigmatisation of these communities by framing them as dangerous. In the context of flood risk, this ‘aestheticisation of risk’ as she terms it, operates by ascribing labels of disaster risk to informal settlements based on the aesthetic of material and environmental endangerment associated with their close proximity to waterways and the fragility of housing structures (ibid.: 40, 137). My analysis of urban development and associated dynamics of dispossession in Metro Cebu highlights the ways in which discourses of sustainability, resilience and climate change adaptation are bolstering the ‘aestheticisation of risk’ ascribed to urban poor communities. This language also contributes to the depoliticisation of DRRM-related dispossession, by framing danger zone evictions as a necessary means of curtailing the vulnerability of the poor to ‘environmental’ risks.

In both local and national DRRM discourse, the vulnerability of women and children is often emphasised, serving to bolster the legitimacy of technocratic masculinist DRRM interventions (see Denton, 2002; MacGregor, 2009: 132; Terry, 2009) that paradoxically prioritise mass infrastructure and engineering projects over localised social development programmes. This, as I argue in Chapter 6 (and throughout this thesis), has distinct gendered and notably feminised implications. Highlighting similar dynamics wherein feminist objectives are ‘used to further agendas that re-inscribe rather than destabilise various oppressions and hierarchies’, Raghavan (2018: no page) discusses how ‘ostensibly feminist’ discussions on sexual violence and ‘the need to “protect some women” has been instrumentalised to justify militarised border regimes, to securitise campuses and cities, to embolden and expand the masculinist state and its military rationalities, rehabilitate or rescue old colonial projects, and advocate for new ones’. In the context of Metro Cebu, gendered ‘protector’ and ‘vulnerability’ narratives are furthering the expansion of

neoliberal market-oriented interests of local strongmen through danger zone evictions over more feminist-oriented ideals of equity and inclusion. As my analysis below and in Chapter 6 reveals, these masculinist, market-based approaches to risk management and urban development are exacerbating gendered and classed embodiments of risk and patterns of inequality.

Furthermore, as emerging research highlights, processes of urban dispossession are intimately gendered in both the embodied materiality of forced evictions, and in the everyday acts of resistance against them, with women often at the helm of these encounters (Baxter and Brickell, 2014; Brickell, 2014; Tilley et al., 2019; see also Chapter 6). When this position of supposed benevolence is appraised alongside the actual conditions in resettlement areas such as Laguerta and wider micropolitics of site development and social housing policy described earlier in this chapter, its sincerity becomes all the more questionable, given the derogatory stereotypes and ‘othering’ reproduced through these programmes. My examination of Mega Cebu also reveals how subjective notions of risk and resilience become deeply entangled in the epistemology of modernity being propagated in Cebu and its associated technologies of governance. This finding contributes to a growing field of scholarship concerned with the ways in which climate change (Grove, 2014; Paprocki, 2018) sustainability (Escobar, 1995, 1996; Kusno, 2011; Swyngedouw, 2014), risk (O’Malley, 2004, 2008, Zeiderman, 2012, 2013, 2016) and resilience (Daouk, 2014; Joseph, 2013; Welsh, 2014; Zebrowski, 2009) discourses are being mobilised in support of political objectives and logics of governance.

#### ***5.4.2 Deviant and disposable: migrants and ‘professional squatters’***

Pejorative moral categorisations of the urban poor were especially prominent in discussions concerning access to social housing. Several government officials described communities at risk of demolition as ‘illegal squatters’, voicing particular disdain for ‘migrants with homes in the province’, and those considered ‘professional squatters’, both of whom are portrayed as taking advantage of the system. UDHA defines ‘professional squatters’ as:

‘individuals or groups who occupy lands without the express consent of the landowner and who have sufficient income for legitimate housing. The term shall also apply to persons who have previously been awarded homelots or housing units by the Government but who sold, leased or transferred the same to settle illegally in the same place or in another urban area, and non-bona fide occupants and intruders of lands reserved for socialized housing’.

On this basis, the term also extends to anyone registered as having been a recipient of relocation or social housing support, but who continues to reside in a danger zone. In theory, this definition would also include CMP beneficiaries, who, unable to afford their monthly amortisations, are evicted from their resettlement lots, and with few other affordable options, wind up back in a danger zone (and criminalised as Bebot Sanchez asserted, should that area be targeted for demolition). Eligibility for relocation and other types of resettlement support as stipulated in UDHA, requires beneficiaries to be Filipino citizens who qualify as ‘underprivileged and homeless’ (with incomes under the poverty threshold and lacking secure land tenure) who do not own any property in urban or rural areas. Beneficiaries must also ‘not be a professional squatter or a member of squatting syndicates’, referring to those engaged in the business of squatter housing for profit or personal gain.

While not explicitly stated in the law, access to a relocation site is also often premised around home ownership, leaving renters and extended family members facing eviction to fend for themselves in terms of finding somewhere to move with the meagre financial compensation offered, usually in the region of around 10,000 pesos (USD 200). According to an employee of the DRRMO in Cebu City, the exclusion of renters from housing and relocation support, including the allocation of 10,000 pesos worth of housing materials in post-disaster situations, was justified ‘because they are just a migrant and not a resident originally [from] here’. Curious about how the label of migrant had been ascribed, I asked him how long one had to reside in Cebu City before being classed as ‘local’. He said:

‘There is no rule. As long as the [danger zone relocation and social housing] programme is continuing, this is a big city. We cannot easily monitor them right away, so as long as we saw that they are in a hazard area and at risk, we will take them out of that particular area. Then we will see that if this person has already benefited from this *Balik Provincia* [Return to the Province] programme, then we will let them again go away back to their origin.’

Seeking more clarity, I asked whether someone living in an area for ten years as a renter would qualify for housing relocation support, to which he replied: ‘[w]ell then that is an exceptional story because if you have already been living here for over five years then you are no longer a migrant.’ Latching onto the stated five year term and rephrasing my previous question with this as the mark, he patiently reiterated: ‘If you have created your family clan here, you will not be called to be a migrant anymore, especially if you are registered in COMELAC, the commission of election [electoral commission]. [T]hat is one of the bases [defining the classification of beneficiaries as local or migrant].’ *Balik Provincia* is a state-funded repatriation programme for low-income informal settlers. When I asked him if people were generally keen to move back to the province, he replied: ‘No choice. We deliver

them back to their origin for free... The city government will provide them 5000 pesos [USD 100] as a disturbance fee for them to adjust their living status. Then after a while they come back again because they feel that they will get an income here in the city.' He proceeded to say that for residents who had been in the city 'for a long time' relocation would be made available in Cebu City, and that they may even qualify for a place in the medium-rise condominiums; a new model of social housing that the government is considering piloting (even if 'beneficiaries' will no doubt have difficulty affording).

Migration status also features ambiguously in the provision of housing and relocation support in Mandaue City. HUDO head, Juanico, told me that financial assistance as dictated by UDHA is only provided to those who can prove residence in the area since 1992 (coinciding with the year the Act was passed, though I was unable to find any evidence of this cut-off date in the text of the Act). For those who settled in a danger zone after 1992, provision of relocation support was 'at the discretion of the city', though he assured me that 'for humanitarian reasons' those who arrived after this date 'are given the 10,000 pesos [USD 200] regardless'. It is also worth noting that in the majority of cases, financial support (and access to publicly-owned relocation sites) was only guaranteed for qualifying individuals being evicted from state-owned land. In evictions from private property, the decision to extend financial assistance to structure owners is at the discretion of the lot owner, though in such cases, HUDO and its Cebu City equivalent, DWUP, may extend support by negotiating with the owners, and helping to identify relocation options.

Relating to these contentions around the rights of renters-cum-migrants in the city, Ortega (2012: 43) exposes a similar logic embodied in Mega Cebu's urban development plan, which, he argues, rests on the removal of slum residents but simultaneous attraction of educated migrant labourers to the city. Extending from his observation, the bodies of the poor, which as discussed, are construed inadvertently as deviant and undesirable, become dispensable. Conversely, bodies of (a certain class of) migrants are framed as desirable and deserving of a place in Mega Cebu owing to their perceived contribution to valued labour markets including the burgeoning business process outsourcing and call centre industries attracting much of the foreign investment in the city. Interestingly, the pathologisation and subsequent exclusion of low-income migrants (and renters) evident in government policy and narratives also features in the testimonies of informal settlers themselves. Migrants were often singled out by male and female respondents alike, blamed for bringing problems (of drugs and crime) into the community. As relayed by a 50 year old woman from Sitio Aroma in a focus group discussion (to the agreement of other participants):

'We experience risk because right now this area is so crowded that we don't even know who our neighbours are. When the adjacent place at the port area was demolished by the government, some households were officially relocated here by the government and others came here to rent because maybe it is close to their livelihood. This happened in the late 1990s and also after the Mahiga Creek demolition in 2015.'

Such statements speak to the tensions that danger zone demolitions and evictions ignite between informal settler communities, where the burdens of increasing vulnerability in an area that is demolished evolves into risks that are transferred to another area (through over-crowding and crime). Furthermore, this 'othering' of renters as migrants, non-citizens, and even criminal is notable in that it deflects attention away from actors who are equally if not more culpable in the production of risk in informal settlements. The ethnographic vignette below illuminates the paradoxical delineation of risk onto urban poor bodies and spaces propagated in popular discourse, while also reiterating the key themes of this chapter pertaining to the relationship between DRRM, urban development and dispossession.

#### ***5.4.3 Development as disaster?***

It is an especially humid Thursday afternoon, in Sitio Aroma, a privately-owned lot housing just over 400 ISFs in Subangdako of Mandaue City, some 350 metres from the Mahiga Creek. Roger, the President of Sitio Aroma Homeowner Association (SAHA) and one of the sitio's original residents, greets me with a coffee and ushers me to our usual meeting area in the small internet café he has set up adjoining his house. Relishing the breeze of his electric fan that is also helping to keep the voracious mosquitos at bay, I listen as he talks me through the changes he has observed in the locality over the years. He and his family first settled in Aroma in the late 1980s. At that time, there were only 15 to 20 *barong barong* (makeshift houses) in the sitio and much of the surrounding land was submerged by water, providing a fertile environment for *kangkong* (water spinach) which grew in abundance offering an immediate source of food and livelihood for the families living there. Roger recounted how this centrally located settlement gradually attracted more and more people searching for work in the city. As the small dry oasis became increasingly congested, newer arrivals began building out into the swamps, using bamboo stilts to support their homes above the water.

Any trace of *kangkong* or stilt houses are now long gone. The families that had been living in the wetlands adjacent to Sitio Aroma were relocated in the 1990s when the Aboitiz family, who own the surrounding lot, decided to reclaim the area in preparation for future commercial development. In 2015, they entered into a joint venture with the Manila-based

Ayala,<sup>58</sup> another of the country's wealthiest and most powerful business families, to construct several high-rise condominiums and commercial outlets. With the disappearance of the natural wetland as the lot was filled in, Sitio Aroma, no longer sitting on higher ground, became the catchment site of water and runoff from the surrounding area.

'There are many big changes to our area since this development has started. The water that is coming from their development area is now rushing towards our area, and since there is nowhere for the water to pass, it is staying in the area, like in our basketball courts. Previously the water would flow out, but because of this development it is much worse.'

Roger and other Sitio Aroma residents I interviewed also told me how they routinely pool their resources to buy concrete and stones in an effort to elevate their settlement, but with seemingly limited effect, as evident in the pervasive puddles of stagnant, murky water collecting in public walkways and the communal basketball court, despite the absence of rain for several days (see Figure 5.11).

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<sup>58</sup> The Ayala Corporation owns several profitable subsidiary companies in banking (Bank of the Philippines), telecommunications (Globe), utilities (Manila Water Company), as well as various manufacturing, property development and real estate firms. The Aboitiz family similarly own numerous successful subsidiaries in energy, finance, infrastructure, construction and shipping.

Figure 5.11: a) Stagnant water and b) flooding in Sitio Aroma



Source: a) Author's photograph, 2016; b) Photograph by Roger, 2017.

Residents raised the issue of water coming in from the Aboitiz/Ayala land during a public scoping meeting held to notify the community of the development, and were told that a culvert would be constructed to channel water offsite and away from Sitio Aroma. Residents asked for the culvert to be connected to their sitio to facilitate the drainage of water from the area, given the extent to which this development has worsened local flooding, but were told no in very clear terms. This represents a rather disappointing response from two of the richest families in the Philippines, and is especially surprising given the mission statements of their respective corporate foundations and their endorsement of Mega Cebu. The Ayala Foundation, for example, purports to aspire to understand 'community realities... acting as catalyst for inclusion to bridge community and business aspirations, and building and nurturing partnerships... to achieve impact, scale, and sustainability for everyone involved.'<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the Mega Cebu mastermind, RAFI, claims to have interests in 'corporate social responsibility interventions especially in

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.ayalafoundation.org/vision-mission-values/> (accessed 28 January, 2018).

communities where Aboitiz companies operate' with a particular interest in projects concerning environment, health and well-being, and disaster preparedness and response.<sup>60</sup>

In any case, almost two years after this scoping meeting, the culvert is still awaiting construction. Moreover, flooding is not the only type of disaster affecting residents. The sitio has also experienced its share of fires; the first in 1994, the second in 2003 and a third in 2010, the latter two destroying all of the structures in the area, although mercifully there were no casualties. In the event of another fire, residents fear that their 'nil casualty' track record may not hold up. Shortly after the public scoping meeting in October 2015, a high fence of metal sheeting was erected around the Aboitiz/Ayala lot to 'protect their property', effectively boxing in Sitio Aroma from the north and east, and leaving residents with only a single very narrow path from which to enter or exit their community. Residents raised their concerns about their restricted mobility in times of emergency and asked the developers for a 1.5 metre right-of-way path to be allotted between their structures and the wall. Their request was refused, forcing residents along the periphery of the settlement to dismantle parts of their homes to create the narrow passageway; a measurable improvement on their situation, although still too small to offer a real sense of assurance to the community.

Ongoing concerns raised by Sitio Aroma resulted in two fire exits and eventually a third being built into the fence, however the fences are chain locked from the back and the keys allegedly held by a security guard to the construction site (see Figure 5.12). This means that in the event of another fire, residents will need to make their way along the narrow path (assuming it is not part of the affected area), outside the settlement, to notify a security guard (whose name and contact details have yet to be provided) who will then need to find the keys and go to each gate to unlock the bolts from the Aboitiz/Ayala side. Unsurprisingly, Roger tells me that he and his neighbours are 'still not comfortable with what they did, making fire exits in the wall, because... it will be very difficult for us if ever there is an emergency, to find this person who has the key in order to be able to open up the fire exits.' Surely this defeats the benefits of emergency exit provisions for when time is likely to be of the essence?

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<sup>60</sup> <http://aboitizfoundation.org/about-us> (accessed 28 January, 2018).

Figure 5.12 'Emergency fire exits as seen from a) Sitio Aroma and b) Aboitiz/Ayala lot



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

Lorna (35), another local resident who had lost and rebuilt her home following the previous two fires, expressed similar feelings:

'We may have fire exits here, but they cannot be opened. That is why we complained to the barangay. They seem to have added a mound of earth to block the gate from opening so if you push it, you cannot open it because of the earth blocking it on the other side. In addition to the soil blocking the gates, there are also very big padlocks on the gates. What they said to us was that only in case of emergency will they remove the soil on the other side and unlock the door. I feel that the fire exit is only an attempt to reassure us that we have nothing to... worry about if ever a fire blazes in the community. It is only an assurance. It is like they just put that fire exit for the sake of a fire exit... but it is no good... [so] we just continuously prepare ourselves and try to be ready for everything, and especially that if there is a fire, that we will be able to just get our children and get out.'

I asked Lorna what she did to prepare given the typically unpredictable or unanticipated nature of these events, to which she replied: 'One of my preparations for example, is when I want to go out, I don't go to places that are far from my home, in order that if there is an emergency, I can go back and save my things and take care of my children.' Lorna's tactic of staying close to home were not unique to her, highlighting an additional embodied

consequence of this urban development project, and fire risk more generally, in limiting gendered mobility.

Although regular flooding and fear of fire are sources of considerable concern, residents in Sitio Aroma are currently preoccupied with an even more worrying threat; that of demolition and eviction. The owners of the lot, the Tanchans, another of Cebu's prominent business families, have recently issued inhabitants with a letter notifying them of their intentions to develop the land, and asking them to vacate their lots. And this is not the first time for Sitio Aroma either. The Tanchans, who for years remained unknown to residents who assumed the land was untitled or state-owned, have twice before made contact, both times in the immediate aftermath of the fires in 2003 and 2010. Both then and now, residents acknowledge Tanchan as the rightful owner of the land, but have requested a relocation site or adequate financial compensation if they are to vacate the area. In 2003 and 2010, negotiations stalled and the Tanchans disappeared from the scene, stating they couldn't afford to purchase a relocation site. They resurfaced in October 2016, coinciding with the Aboitiz/Ayala developments, offering to pay structure owners 15,000 pesos (USD 300) to vacate the area. While some agreed to accept the offer and leave by the end of March 2018, SAHA members maintain that they would prefer a group relocation site, or in lieu of that, have asked that the compensation be increased by 35,000 pesos (a total of USD 1000) to give them a more realistic chance of being able to buy their own lot. However at the time of my last meeting with Roger in November 2017, Tanchan had rejected their counter-proposal, leaving negotiations in a state of deadlock. Roger has since decided to ask HUDO for the city's help in negotiating the provision of a relocation site with the owners. He remains hopeful of a solution to their current condition, which he describes as a 'human disaster':

'I say... a human disaster because it is as if our sitio is being struck by an earthquake or a storm where we would be forced to leave our houses and our settlement against our will... We don't have any problem with leaving the land right now. It is just that we want a relocation site to transfer to. If they... give us financial compensation [of 15,000 pesos (USD 300)], it will actually just be resulting in another problem. The problem when it comes to informal settlers or squatters will still remain. Because... people will just have to choose anywhere, probably another danger zone along the river, in the three metre easement. People will be pushed to those areas because that is the only area that they can afford.'

Sitio Aroma's story showcases the blatant double standards inherent to common ascriptions of blame and accountability in (disaster) risk creation. Furthermore, it speaks to the highly nuanced and subjective nature of DRRM, a process that is not neutral, but rather, is deeply implicated in socio-economic, environmental and (gendered) spatial

politics of power and privilege. For Sitio Aroma's residents, disaster risk and the threat of demolition and displacement are both produced and exacerbated by corporate actors, exercising their power through the marketisation of urban space predicated around worlding imaginaries and modernising aesthetics that simultaneously victimise, stigmatise and exclude the urban poor. In a previous conversation with Roger, I asked his thoughts on Mega Cebu. He spoke positively about the proposed coastline beautification, especially the construction of boardwalk along the Mandaue City seafront, but felt that urban planning needed to include the interests of the urban poor. As far as he was aware, to date there had been little effort to involve them in discussions defining the future vision of the city. Linking the urban transformations inherent in Mega Cebu with the impending Aboitiz/Ayala developments surrounding him, Roger worried that once condominiums were erected, Aroma would almost certainly be demolished because as he put it: 'we are *sore eyes* [equating to 'eyesore' in English] for the people living there', elaborating that people in condominiums did not want to spend all that money on an apartment to look down into a slum; yet another reference to the powers of aesthetic governmentality (Ghertner, 2015) shaping the cityscape.

Similar threats were also perceived by Alaska residents, which Rico (41) linked to the Rama administration's efforts to thwart the implementation of the city ordinance extending the repayment term for SIR beneficiaries:

'There is a plan of the previous administration that we will be out of this land [evicted] and... they will use this as a commercial site, because this land is very much expensive because we are near to the mall, we are near to SRP. So they want us to vacate this area and they plan [for] us to live in the medium-rise building like condominium style. And we don't want to live there. Because you know in the condominium, you cannot plant, you cannot, you know? [Points at the chickens and hog pens next to us]... They want this as commercialised area not as socialised housing.'

He also shared Roger's opinion on Mega Cebu:

'As usual, we the urban poor is affected. Yes, because [in] the development in the city, only they develop [moves his left hand up to reflect elite development and prosperity] but the urban poor are pushed down. If the Mega Cebu project pursues, there are [going to be] many demolition happening in the city. That's for sure. Because the buildings, flyover, railroad project. And what will happen with those areas? Demolish!...We are not against development per say. As long as poor people will be not disenfranchised or displaced. So the poor people must always be considered, in every development, in every programme. But as expected, the poor are always left behind. SM Seaside is the fifth largest mall in the world. Yes! Fifth largest mall in the world, owned by the billionaire... the number one richest man I think in Asia, or in the Philippines. Go and see that place and you look why the

government will want to evict us from this place. Because we are *sore eyes* on the development.'

Whether on private or publicly-owned land, urban development is undoubtedly seen by respondents to be heightening their threat of displacement from the city.

However urban development is not a zero sum game with clearly demarcated winners and losers, but a complex bundle of relationships and effects that are both contingent and nuanced. Jerry's testimony at the beginning of Chapter 4 alludes to some of these dynamics, when he describes the disastrous effects of the SRP on the livelihoods of local fisherman and the threat of demolition that has been exacerbated in Alaska because of its close proximity to this valuable commercial hub, proceeding to tell me about the leisure and livelihood opportunities that residents have benefitted from since the opening of SM Mall. Jerry also noted an additional advantage of the SRP development, being 'that whenever there is a typhoon, the SRP serves as a natural breaker so our community is much more protected, unlike before when we would... get hit by the water and the strong winds' (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.3). In a similar vein, a female respondent discussing the impacts of the fence around Sitio Aroma also identified a trade-off:

'The main effect of this wall is the risk for our lives in case there is a fire here... But on the other hand it also has an advantage because ever since that fence is up, we no longer see that garbage that comes from here. It was so dirty with people going there for the toilet.'

It appears that for many informal settlers in Cebu, urban transitions tend to reflect a trade-off rather than reduction of risks; a point poignantly articulated in one woman's reflections on her relocation from the city-centre to Laguerta: 'At the port, there was robbery, looting and fires. Here we have landslides and fires.'

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the political dynamics and actors complicit in the production of risk in informal settlements in Metro Cebu, and revealed how intersecting environmental, material and socio-political configurations, bound by particular geographies, feature within these processes. Building on the arguments put forth in Chapter 4, I have used the concept of the 'materiality of the political' to expose the multiple embodiments of risks that are produced and reinforced through sustained infrastructural and political neglect as seen from the perspectives of informal settlers themselves. Moving beyond appraisals of gendered vulnerability, I have shown how the presence or absence of material infrastructures affects residents' encounters with risk and their gendered practices across productive and reproductive domains, illuminating how infrastructural exclusions interact

with social inequalities and physical landscapes to create 'spatial poverty traps' (Unterhalter, 2009) and cycles of risk and insecurity (Allen et al., 2015). In drawing attention to the relational dimensions of risk and vulnerability rooted in socio-political and material hierarchies of power and privilege, these findings reinforce my earlier critiques of objectivist techno-scientific portrayals of (disaster) risk and risk governance.

I have also highlighted the ways in which public service provision and land tenure inequalities are exacerbated if not directly produced by masculinist political arrangements and models of neoliberal urban development that prioritise economic growth and market-based solutions over equitable access and (re)distribution. As depicted above, the blurred lines separating business from government which manifest in the 'bossism' characterising Cebuano politics in particular, lends urban governance and associated development interventions to elite capture, with DRRM being no exception. As summarised by Sidel (2004: 56), in the Philippines 'local bosses have used their considerable discretionary powers – over zoning ordinances, construction contracts, and police forces used for busting unions and clearing land of “squatters” – to oil their political machines by serving as gatekeepers and facilitators to Manila-based and foreign investors.' This framing is not to present the state as a uniform entity of monolithic actors, but rather to highlight the masculinist configurations of power and political dynamics which are informing urban governance in Metro Cebu; dynamics which respondent testimonies reveal adversely affect not only the urban poor but also the operational capacities of government employees themselves.

The Mega Cebu project serves as a case in point wherein technical solutions attractive to local strongmen and private investors are championed via state machinery as the path to a more sustainable, equitable and resilient future. However my analysis of the discourse regime underpinning Mega Cebu thwarts its self-acclamations of inclusion and resilience, exposing instead dynamics of dispossession bolstered by the mobilisation of a revanchist discourse that stigmatises the urban poor through ascriptions of (disaster) risk-cum-vulnerability to legitimate their expulsion from high-valued land in the city. I have also revealed how within these discursive and governance interactions, class and migrant status intersect to produce particular exclusions and disadvantages in terms of people's rights to land and access to social housing, reinforcing the complex and overlapping identities that shape socio-ecological disadvantages and thus the value of thinking intersectionally in political ecology analyses. Offering added validation to anti-slum rhetoric, I have argued that this packaging of DRRM buttressed by the threat of climate change and worlding ideals of modernity conveniently obscures the culpability of the elite politicians and private

commercial and property developers in these processes. My analysis of respondent testimonies from Laguerta and Sitio Aroma has also suggested that the restructuring of urban space and consequent dispossession enabled through the models of neoliberal urban development and disaster risk governance operating in Cebu, are in fact reinforcing rather than redressing circumstances of vulnerability and insecurity among the urban poor; the effects of which, as highlighted in Chapter 4 (and shortly in Chapter 6), are gendered.

As anyone familiar with the Central Visayan capital can attest, there is an obvious and urgent need for greater investment and more coherent planning around flood management and other transboundary urban development issues. As such, my intentions are not to criticise DRRM efforts in the city or the ambition of Mega Cebu to facilitate more collaborative urban planning and development. Rather I have sought to draw attention to the cumulative socio-spatial implications of city-making and risk governance approaches that necessitate the (often forced) displacement of thousands of the city's most disenfranchised residents, and to the moralistic and stigmatising undertones that inadvertently mark the poor as the cause of not only their own vulnerability, but of the city's susceptibility to (disaster) risks including floods and fires. Having contextualised the political dynamics and multi-directional hierarchies of power informing the production and governance of risk in informal settlements, the following chapter explores the strategies and modes of political engagement adopted by informal settlers themselves within this terrain.

## **6 Homeowner associations and community-based risk management: the causes and consequences of participation**

This chapter explores the risk management activities and tactics of political engagement adopted by informal settlers to mitigate and contest the everyday and exceptional risks that threaten their communities. Building on the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, I focus my analysis on informal settler homeowner associations, institutions which I have identified as serving multiple risk management functions in informal settlements. Registering as an association enables the urban poor to formally enter into negotiations with the state, to make claims on public resources and to contest efforts to displace them. In particular, I interrogate the causes and consequences associated with participation in these grassroots organisations, and reveal these sites of collective action to be reinforcing gender dynamics that instrumentalise notions of female selflessness, altruism and sacrifice in service of the community. My analysis of women's testimonies in particular also shows that their participation in homeowner associations comes with a number of benefits that have been significant to, what they described as, their personal journeys of empowerment.

I begin by analysing the emergence of homeowner associations within the five study sites introduced in Chapter 3, examining the circumstances or events that prompted their formation and the personal motivations driving membership and ongoing participation. Drawing on life histories and personal reflections, I reveal a relationship between localised experiences of risk and the formation of homeowner associations, identifying housing and land tenure insecurity as the primary factors incentivising individuals to organise collectively. Extending from the discussion in Chapter 4 which highlighted gendered differences in perceptions of and encounters with risk, I argue that these realities of risk and insecurity, shaped inter alia by gendered identities and divisions of labour, are contributing to the feminised character of rank-and file participation within urban poor homeowner associations. To further substantiate this claim, I consider the various risk management functions performed by homeowner associations, evaluating the socio-spatial manifestations of gender roles, power and agency operating within, and extending from these spaces of collective action.

Identifying a set of seemingly contradictory dynamics which simultaneously enable and constrain processes of women's empowerment, I contend that traditional gender ideologies and associated labour inequalities are being inadvertently perpetuated through

loosely mandated *bayanihan*<sup>61</sup> activities, which are themselves bolstered by civic attempts to govern risk through responsabilisation. However participation in homeowner associations also appears to be facilitating meaningful (if unintended) transformations, especially among (pro)active women, with effects that are extending to the realm of the household and beyond. Furthermore, as depicted in the ethnographic vignettes from LMISKP and especially in the concluding story about MUPHAI's efforts to contest a decision by local government to raffle off the resettlement rights of CICC fire victims, homeowner associations offer residents a critical political platform for challenging the dynamics of displacement and urban development discussed in Chapter 5. That said, the extent to which they are transforming the broader political structures and class-oriented power hierarchies within the city remains questionable.

## ***6.1 Responding to (and coping with) risk: the role of homeowner associations***

### ***6.1.1 Risk and insecurity as a catalyst for community organising***

As the previous two chapters have highlighted, although threats associated with climate change and large-scale disasters appear at the forefront of local risk governance interventions within informal settlements, from the perspectives of the urban poor themselves, it is the everyday risks associated with poverty and land tenure insecurity that are of greatest concern. Across all five study sites, collective efforts to prepare for, manage, and respond to risks, whether of the everyday or exceptional variety, were largely being instigated and sustained through local homeowner associations. As noted in Chapter 3, these were also my point of entry into the communities, facilitated by the NGO FORGE, who in many cases supported residents to organise themselves and continue to provide resources and guidance to bolster the reach and efficacy of association activities.

Homeowner associations are mandated through the 2009 Magna Carta for Homeowners and Homeowner Associations (see Chapter 3, footnote, p. 84-5), and once registered, become the delegated authority on various local governance matters. In informal settlements, this includes everything from sourcing affordable water and electricity connections through to negotiating public investments for roads, sanitation and public transportation. As discussed at length in the previous two chapters, in as much as residents' exclusion from public services and the absence of WASH and other basic infrastructure

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<sup>61</sup> A Tagalog term denoting the spirit of collective action and volunteerism.

produces and exacerbates their everyday encounters with certain types of risk, the efforts of homeowner associations to procure these services and lobby for greater public investment in their areas can be seen as a form of risk management. Under circumstances of eviction, homeowner associations also take the lead in identifying affordable relocation sites and advocating for the broader interests of their members. This often includes lobbying for adequate compensation in the aftermath of disasters or demolitions, and in some cases, acting as the conduit through which communities are able to access social housing and resettlement support, such as in the brokering of repayments and land titles under the CMP described in Chapter 5.

The prominence of homeowner associations within informal settlements is not unique to Cebu, and as discussed in Chapter 1, is part of a long history of community organising and collective action consolidated during and in the immediate aftermath of the Marcos dictatorship (Constantino-David, 1985, 1995; Shatkin, 2000, 2007). Originally spearheaded by church-based organisations and later sustained by NGOs such as FORGE, community organising in the Philippines combines the ideas of American community organiser Saul Alinsky, with Marxian-inspired liberation theology and Freirean notions of critical consciousness, to mobilise communities into collective action and democratic participation to address local needs and issues. As recounted to me by FORGE's Executive Director, Ruth Restauero:

'The founding Executive Director of this organisation, Gwen Ngolaban, she was a nun but she went out of the convent because she felt like she was not really living the kind of service that she wanted to do with the people. And so she went through a training of community organising during the martial law years in one of the biggest slum areas in Manila, and that is Tondo. And when she went back to Cebu she worked as a government employee after the martial law years, after the People Power Revolution, she went back to Cebu and worked in the PCUP I think, a government entity. But then they realised that they wanted to set up an NGO because all of the NGOs at that time were focused in rural areas doing organising of farmers... but none in the urban centres. And there were many development aggression events that happened already in Cebu but the urban poor were not organised and she had experience of doing community organising with the urban poor in Manila and so she thought that it would be important for Cebu to have an NGO that would focus on organising the urban poor. So they set it up, this organisation, the Fellowship for Organising Endeavours, with four community organisers, all women organisers. So that is the beginning of FORGE... [F]or a long time, they adopted the Alinsky type of issue-based organising... and later ventured into other services like capability building of peoples organisations, advocacy, lobbying and later governance.

Following the Alinsky tradition, all communities organised by FORGE, including those that participated in this research, are guided through a ten step process (see Table 6.1) culminating in the establishment of a formal association. This begins with FORGE's

community organisers immersing themselves in the community to build rapport and trust with residents, identifying who are the local leaders and observing the types of issues affecting the community and ‘the probability of solving them through community mobilization’. Residents are then mobilised through informal conversations and home visits where they are encouraged to share the issues and priorities affecting them and their community, and once enough momentum and interest has been gathered, a group meeting is called to discuss the issues raised and identify the priorities and an action plan for addressing them.

*Table 6.1 FORGE’s ten steps of community organising*

<b>Steps/Process</b>	<b>Definition and Purpose</b>
<b>1. Integration</b>	Establishing rapport with the people in a continuing effort to imbibe community life by living with them and undergoing the same experiences as they do, sharing their hopes, aspirations and hardship as a way to build mutual respect, trust and cooperation. The organizer’s try to immerse in the community to get to know the culture, history, economy, leaders and lifestyle of the people.
<b>2. Social investigation, issue identification and analysis</b>	<p>Is the process of systematically learning and analyzing the various structure and forces in the community economic, political, socio-cultural. This also requires the CO [community organizer] to gather data on geographic, economic, political and socio cultural situation of the community in order to identify and understand the problems and issues that need immediate and long term solution.</p> <p>Analyzing and ranking community issues and needs according to their importance, the urgency of solving them, the number of people affected, and the probability of solving them through community mobilization. This step aim to identify the common felt need or issue around which the next organizing step will revolve.</p>
<b>3. Tentative planning and strategizing</b>	Identifying goals and translating them into specific activities to meet community needs or solve community problems. The final plans and decisions have to be done by the people in the community, but the organizer can begin the process. In CO standard core group formation has been establish in this step to ensure the role of CO and indigenous leaders.
<b>4. Groundwork</b>	To go around the community and motivate the people on a one-to one basis and through informal group discussions to do something about the common issues or felt needs in the community. The process usually takes the form of agitation

	where the emotional, mental, and physical energies of the people are raised to a level where they are eager to take collective action.
<b>5. Community meeting</b>	Is the step in organizing where as many people as possible in the communities are gathered to formally discuss the issues raised during the groundwork to plan their actions to address the issues. Meeting aims at an agreement among the community residents on their common needs and problems, and the necessary actions and delineation of tasks that must be undertaken to resolve the issues.
<b>6. Role play</b>	Means to act out the negotiation or dialog that will take place between the leaders of the people and the target of the mobilization. This step aims to prepare the people, especially their leaders, for actual execution of the negotiation or dialog, and the whole community mobilization on the issue itself.
<b>7. Mobilization</b>	The actual community action undertaken to address and resolve the identified community issues and concerns. For issue based organizers, this can be in the form of negotiation or dialog coupled with pressure tactics. For socio-economic based organizers, this refers to mobilizing the people to start and run socio-economic project. Mobilization is the actual experience of people confronting the powerful and the actual exercise of people's power.
<b>8. Evaluation</b>	The process of discovering by the people what has been accomplished, what has been left out and remains to be done. It aims to extract learning on how to do better in the next mobilization.
<b>9. Reflection</b>	It means analyzing and identifying the lessons from the finished mass action. The whole organizing process is hoped to be a learning experience of the community regarding power—its present form in the society, its effects on the community, and on how the poor can be empowered.
<b>10. Formal organization</b>	This step refers to the formal structuring and formation of all the features of a permanent community based organization. The formal setting up of the community organization maybe done through a general assembly where the constitution and organizational plans are ratified and approved.

Source: Table developed and provided by FORGE, 2019.

When I asked officers about the history of their homeowner associations, the threat of demolition and eviction was ubiquitously identified as the main reason prompting them to organise. For the majority of respondents, this was also their primary motivation for becoming (and remaining) a member. As reflected in 70 year old Laguerta resident

Artemio's account of the circumstances that led him to get involved in his homeowner association:

'I first joined the homeowner association... because the owner... of the land [we were previously living on] said that "we will give you one month to vacate because we want to use the land". So we went to City Hall and they told us how to make an association. City Hall will not help you if you don't have an association, so you have to form a group, with a president, vice president, secretary and officials. So that is why we made an association, and at that time I was the oldest, so they made me the president. This was in 2006.'

Similarly Lower Mahiga resident, Genita (53), who initiated the establishment of her local homeowner association told me: 'When I arrived here [in 2006], I knew that this lot was not owned by these people but that there was a landowner [meaning we could be evicted]. That is why I decided to invite them to create an association.' In the absence of a title deed or memorandum of agreement (MOA) identifying residents as legal occupants of the land, all of the respondents I spoke with were acutely aware that one day in the future, they might be forced to leave. While this sense of insecurity was something that they lived with every day, what became apparent through their stories was the extent to which this threat was accentuated in the aftermath of disasters.

Fires, in particular, were intimately connected with the genealogy of homeowner associations as they were often a precursor to eviction attempts, with several respondents sharing stories of landowners emerging from the shadows in the immediate aftermath of a blaze, to try and prevent residents from returning to or rebuilding their homes. As poignantly depicted by long term resident and SAHA member Antonio (64): 'We have been threatened with demolition three times already. After the first fire [1994], after the second fire [2003], and then again in 2012 [mistakenly referring to the fire in 2010].' Learning from the experience of an adjacent settlement that had managed to stave off the threat of demolition by organising themselves, Sitio Aroma residents began informally organising in 1990 in anticipation of similar encounters. However according to Roger, who played a key role in the establishment of SAHA, it was not until the fire of 2003 that they formally registered themselves as an association:

'The main reason why we had to elect the officers and register SAHA was because after the fire in 2003, the landowner came here and there was a threat of demolition... After the fire, Tanchan's [the owner's] daughter went here... to tell us that we cannot go back here. Same as 2010... So after the fire, the landowner didn't want us to go back here and that is the time we created SAHA. And with SAHA, we have already a legal identity, so we were able to negotiate with the landowner with the barangay captain as the mediator regarding the land.'

SITAPRA President in Alaska Mambaling, Marifel (39), who was also instrumental in mobilising her neighbours to form an association, described a similar series of events, wherein a fire (suspected arson) provoked altercations with the alleged landowner who sought to evict the residents from the area:

'[O]ur first meeting... was ... after the fire in 2006, because the landowner actually came here after the fire to claim this land and said that we were no longer able to come back here... [W]e said to him... "show us the evidence that you are really the owner of the land". But during that time, he wasn't able to show any evidence, so that is why we were able to come back here and rebuild our houses. That was also the time that we set up the organisation... We felt that if we had an organisation and we were organised, then by the time the landowner returned, we are united. If we are united, then we are many [*kong united mi, daghang mi*]. And if we are a mass of people, then the landowner won't just be able to ignore us, he will have to talk with us and negotiate with us. And the City Hall would also listen to us so that we can lobby for our issue. But if we are just one or two people meeting the landowner, then they will not hear us and there will be no negotiation.'

Both urban poor respondents and community organisers said that arson was a common tactic used by the state and private landowners to remove informal settlers from their land, reinforcing my assertions in the previous chapter on the insidious ways in which public and private actors are directly implicated in the production of risks in informal settlements. Recounting the events leading up to his relocation to Laguerta, Jaime (57) described his experiences:

'I was in Pier Kwatro originally but it was hit by a fire so after the fire we built a makeshift house along the gutter... After the fire, we had been told that we could move back to the area in Pier Kwatro, but this engineer, [the alleged owner of the lot]... had already closed off the area... We lived in the gutter for about a month and then... one of our neighbours told us about Pier Sayis. Other families that had been living in Pier Kwatro transferred there already before us.'

Soon after moving to Pier Sayis, an area owned by the Philippines National Bank, Jaime and the other residents were threatened with eviction again:

'That was the time that we decided to create our own association... [W]e were really scared that there might be another fire and that they [the owners] might try to burn our houses down... We were worried about arson because that is what happened in Pier Kwatro... the bottle [of flammable liquid] was placed somewhere [in the settlement] with the intention of getting us to clear the land. That was a private lot. So we were worried.'

Mistrusting the landowner based on previous experiences, the association set up a fire watch group and, according to Jaime, also:

'started taking photos of the guards that were sent by the owner to the area. Some households agreed to receive a compensation to get paid and then they were demolished. So the pictures we would take was of the guards as they were doing the

demolition. Just in case maybe this household had not been paid, we would have evidence.'

Following several months of negotiations between the Philippines National Bank and their homeowner association, Jaime and the other residents of Pier Sayis found themselves dismantling their houses yet again. With only 3500 pesos (USD 70) remaining in financial compensation after paying the down payment for his lot, he and his wife were transferred in 2005 to the slopes of Laguerta where he has been living since. Thinking back to his time at Pier Sayis, he said: 'For me I think it was [important to have a homeowner association] to help us have clear status as residents in the area'; status that identified them as legitimate beneficiaries for accessing relocation support from the state. Jaime remains an active member of the organisation, regularly attending meetings, activities and seminars and doing his best to pay the monthly dues. These narratives reinforce my arguments in previous chapters about the relationship between everyday and exceptional risks. Also interesting is the fact that in every community, it was risk in various temporal and material and emotional embodiments that prompted them to organise and register as a homeowner association. This suggests that residents perceive homeowner associations as offering them some level of protection or security to immediate and future threats, and therein serving an important risk management function. In the three sub-sections that follow, I unpack this perception in more depth focusing on the significance and value ascribed by residents to their association.

### **6.1.2 Visibility, voice and validity**

In our conversations about the benefits of having and maintaining homeowner association membership, another key theme across respondent testimonies was the perceived power of collective action. As articulated above by Marifel, '*kong united mi, daghang mi*' (if we are united then we are many), with sheer numbers seen (if not hoped) by respondents to add impetus for the government and landowner(s) to hear them out and offer a reasonable response. In coming together and registering as a homeowner association, informal settlers make themselves visible to the state as occupants of the land, thereby establishing themselves as legitimate citizens with entitlements to certain rights and support. As Genita explained:

'it is important to us that we are recognised by a legal body... [I]f I didn't do something about it [i.e. register the association], then we would still be illegal residents here, but now, because we are registered, we are no longer labelled as squatters. By registering with HLURB [the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board] we are recognised as legal residents'.

Similarly, in SAHA President Roger's mind, registering with government departments was essential so that members 'have an identity with the city and can avail of the benefits that each organisation has to offer'.

Homeowner associations are required to register with relevant government departments such as HLURB, HUDO, DWUP, PCUP, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Labour and Employment. This process involves paying a small fee and submitting documents including a list of members and meeting minutes in order to validate the association's authenticity. As alluded to above by Artemio, registering as a homeowner association is generally a prerequisite to engaging in any dialogue with government agencies, including negotiations around site development, social housing and relocation support, not to mention wider access to publicly funded programmes and services. In all of their capacities, these institutions act as a conduit of information exchange between outside parties and the local residents, and are therein vital networks through which the urban poor are able to advocate for social welfare interventions and respond to local issues in a context of limited state capacities and resources. In this regard, while homeowner associations can be classified as 'invited spaces' (Cornwall, 2002, 2004a) in as much as they are endorsed and encouraged by the government and facilitate the state's ability to govern urban poor communities, they also constitute an important medium through which informal settlers are able to voice their interests, make claims on public resources and contest efforts to displace them without adequate compensation or provision of a relocation site; a point I will return to later in the chapter.

Officers in particular were acutely aware that in the absence of an association, their efforts to lobby the state for support would quickly be ignored. According to married mother of four and Vice President Daya (38): 'if it was not for the association we would not have had the capacity to bring out our concerns to the government... As an association, we have a voice to the barangay and we can have a say on matters in our community.' For most respondents however, it was the legal recognition or documentation of their household as residents in the area that was a primary factor motivating individual membership; validation that was perceived as particularly important should they be threatened with eviction. Sitio Aroma resident Nilda (50) became a member of SAHA five years ago:

'...so that in the future we [our family] would be able to avail of housing programmes through SAHA. If the owner ever decides for us to have a relocation, then our family will be included as one of the beneficiaries of that relocation, which is very very important for us. I think that is why it is important for us in this community to be a member of the association because the association will be the one connecting us to the government.'

Nilda's motives echo the majority of Sitio Aroma respondents, for whom membership in the association was believed to offer some level of assurance that if they are evicted from the lot, they will not be left landless. Single mother of two, Jean (early 40s) told me: 'We are anxious about demolition... because this is private property so we never know when the demolition is going to come... But for now... because of SAHA... we have nothing to fear... If there is a demolition, we know where we are going to go [we will be relocated] after that.' Similarly, Aroma resident Christina (45) said: '...we already know that we are living on land that isn't really ours... And for me, that is the main reason that I joined SAHA. So that I will have access to a relocation site if ever we are transferred from here.' Perceptions of the protection offered by joining a homeowner association were reinforced by stories of displacement and resistance from other urban poor communities, as relayed by Lower Mahiga resident Divina (39):

'I always hear that the reason why that house was demolished is because that house is not part of the homeowner association. There have not been many demolitions here in the area. The demolitions that I heard of were in Barangay Luz, that they were demolished because they were not part of their association. I heard that from the mother of one of the demolished who lives here.'

### ***6.1.3 The importance of home and hope***

Related to the pursuit of legitimacy and land tenure security touched on above, the importance of 'home' in an ideological and material sense, as something that is safe (structurally) and secure in the sense that it cannot be taken away from them, was frequently expressed by both male and female respondents as a factor influencing their decision to join the association. Lower Mahiga resident, Annabelle (early 50s) for example, 'joined... so that maybe there is a possibility that I could be a lot owner myself.' When I asked her how the homeowner association might facilitate this, she explained: 'I think the association will be able to help us because if the time comes that the government is wanting to sell the lot, then if you are a member, you will be considered part of those who will [be eligible to] buy the lot.' Her neighbour, 27 year old Glenn, who was born in Lower Mahiga, expressed similar motives: 'the first reason for me joining... is because I really want to own a house of my own... [Being a member] promises us that once there is a negotiation for selling the land, we hope that one day we will be able to own the land by paying for it.' When read alongside the narratives cited above, Glenn and Annabelle's statements reinforce the strategic temporal dimension underpinning the decision to join a homeowner association. Here, hope and aspirations for a better future appear as central motives; the hope of one day owning their own plot of land, or as one female respondent from Alaska put it, hope 'to

live in a home where we can really own it, a house that we can really call ours, that we don't have to move from one place to another and a lot that is really ours'.

Ambitions relating to secure housing also prompted Laguerta resident and mother of eight Sally(35), to volunteer as an officer in her homeowner association when they were threatened with eviction at Pier Sayis during the period described above by Jaime:

'For me my main priority is to own my own house and that is the reason why I wanted to have a relocation site [and was active in the homeowner association]. Because I knew that then I would have an opportunity to own my own lot and house... I really want[ed] to have this house because I feel that if I already have this house, my children will be secured, knowing that we already have a place to stay of our own, because you can see other children on the streets and I think they really don't have their own house. At the moment we cannot use the back of our house because of the rain. Where our house is [located], the land is actually uneven [on a slope] so the tendency is that the rain just comes in and so we are not be able to sleep well in that part of the house. But our plan is that when we already have the money to repair our house, the floor will be cemented so that it will be even.'

The importance of home for Sally resurfaced in a later discussion about a photograph she had taken (see Figure 6.1):

'This is my dream house. When I was... shopping in 2013... I saw this picture and I thought, I like this one. It is nice. Maybe it is my ambition, because I think if you have no ambition in your life you will just remain so very poor. It is good to have ambition so I bought these pictures of the fruits [see Figure 4.12, p. 151] and the house. When I bought it at that time, I was thinking [wishing]... that I would be able to have that house for myself. My thoughts were already travelling to the future, and I was happy, even in if only in my dreams... A house is very important, especially if you have a family, because if you have a family you need to be together and for you to be able to do that, you need to have a house.'

Manuel (43) another respondent from Laguerta, had also taken a photograph of his house, stating: 'For me a family should have a house, because a house will provide you with a place to sleep, to eat, and to do all the things that a family needs to do. If you do not have a house, your own house, then for me, your family will not be complete.' Although it is clear from these testimonies that home matters to both women and men, the centrality of domestic spaces to the reproductive and productive activities of female informal settlers and female identity more broadly (see Chant and McIlwaine, 2016), as discussed in Chapter 4, would suggest that the meaning of home to women, and their affective ties to this environment, are likely different to men's (see Blunt, 2005; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Gorman-Murray, 2008; Massey, 1994).

Figure 6.1 Aspirations of home



Source: Photograph by Sally, TULHOA, 2016.

Hopes relating to housing and land tenure security also underscore many of the respondent testimonies linking exposure to hazards with housing quality and location, as depicted above by Sally, and in Chapter 4 (see p. 159) when Jaime voiced his desire to repair his house so that he would be dry when it rained. Married mother of four and homeowner association officer Cheryl (38) also expressed her dream ‘for my house to be finished... to be a good house for my family. One of our plans is to get the floor downstairs cemented... and that... eventually we will own the land.’ For several respondents in Laguerta, these home improvement aspirations fuelled their ongoing participation in their association, bolstered by their memory of housing and livelihood initiatives administered to members in the past, that if repeated might enable them to afford new materials. Artemio, one of the beneficiaries of this programme, recollected:

‘We were told by the INGO that we would be given 15 houses. So DWUP said, you check the attendance and those with perfect attendance are to be given a house. They told us to do this [build our houses] by *bayanihan*. Today we work here, tomorrow we will over there in your house. So we did this as a group. I have so many best friends, so many people came and helped me work on my house, and we also helped many people. It took almost two months to build this house.’

That in this instance, beneficiaries were identified based on their attendance and participation in the homeowner association reinforces the above claims from respondents that affiliation with these state-mandated organisations offers them (as informal settlers) a degree of legitimacy or credibility in the public eye; setting them apart to some extent from the illegal, immoral ‘other’ insinuated in the discourse and imagery analysed in Chapter 5.

In Lower Mahiga, housing repairs had become an especially contentious issue, and at the time of my fieldwork, was a focal point of LMISKP’s advocacy efforts. As discussed in Chapter 3, the land on which they are living, though within the boundaries of Cebu City, is owned by the provincial government. It also happens to be located right next to the prestigious Maria Luisa gated community, housing many of the city’s rich and famous, and thus has attracted the attention of speculative private investors who see its potential for development. When I was first invited by Genita to visit the area in July 2016, she told me of rumours circulating that the provincial government was planning to sell the land to the developers of Maria Luisa. This she felt, explained the noticeable change in the attitude of the provincial government towards local residents (many of whom had been living there as far back as the 1930s). This shift was most acute in changes subtly introduced to the permit applications that residents needed to submit prior to making any infrastructural developments to the land. This included individual repairs or extensions to existing personal structures, as well as more communal improvements, such as securing electricity and water connections. Though this permit had long existed, during Gwendolyn Garcia’s term as provincial governor (2003-2013), a waiver was introduced alongside the permit, which if signed, would rescind residents’ rights to contest or claim compensation should the government decide to develop the land and demolish their structure. As Genita understood it:

‘If you sign the waiver and the government will come here and want to use the land, they don’t have any responsibility with you. You will just have to go out. For us, it is OK for us to apply for the permit but not the waiver. We are not signing the waiver... But it is difficult for us when we want to make a repair because we need to apply to the Province for a permit for approval of repair. Before, when I did this, it took one month, now I don’t know. Before it was not so strict but now some people who applied for the permit, when they brought through the materials, the outpost guard from the Province of Cebu, they check and make sure that everything you are bringing through is on this list. That is why people have stopped repairing their house. You have to take photos of the place you will repair, submit a list of materials and you have to pay for this [permit]... [Some] people have actually signed the waivers and right now they are very scared. Before they signed without really understanding what it is. It is only me who discovered what the waiver was for. I got the permit for my neighbour and then got a copy of the waiver and was really surprised why there was a waiver with the permit, so that is the time I read it. So I

asked a lawyer “if we sign this waiver, what does it mean? Is it that we will no longer have the security over our land?” And they said “yes, that is what it is.”

Unsurprisingly, the issue of home repairs (and more specifically the permit) featured repeatedly in the concerns expressed by Lower Mahiga respondents, including Annabelle:

‘This photo is a picture of my house and if it was not for the need to have permission for it to be repaired, I would really love to repair my house, but to do that you need to have a permit... I would like to have it cemented, but if that is not possible, we just need to make do with what we have. It is currently a mix of plastic sheeting, wood and tarpaulin with a metal roof.’

According to married mother of two Carol (42) who migrated to Lower Mahiga some fifteen years ago:

‘The permit is easy to get but in order to get the permit, you have to sign a waiver. The waiver says that if you sign this one, then if ever the government will need this land, you are not entitle to a resettlement, so you will just transfer somewhere without the government giving you any financial support or any aid... Before I was able to buy a small house, but a large tree fell on it. So the attorney from the Capitol [provincial government], when I tried to have a permit, he said that the qualifications for you to get a permit to repair your house is that it is standing; that there is a structure, or a column. But in my case it was a hut and a tree fell down on it, so it was flat. So I was confused about how I could avail this permit so that I could build up my house again. What he said was just provide me a picture of that house, or the structure, for me to give you a permit. And so I told him that I had a picture of my house because it was already surveyed by the Capitol, numbering the houses here in the community. I was the one who assisted them. So they agreed to actually give me a permit... but then I did not get the permit because of the waiver, I don’t want to sign the waiver so I did not avail it. That is one of the main concerns that we are working on as a homeowner association. For that waiver to be removed... So until now, I am renting a house.’

Glenn took a photograph of a neighbour’s house (see Figure 6.2 top), keen to highlight the plight of a family he felt empathy for because they:

‘...are having difficulties in their life... The form of their house changed after the typhoon (Yolanda) because the tarpaulin house was blown away, it was gone. So the materials they used to rebuild this house are just materials scavenged from the forest... What is really difficult if you want to repair your house is getting the permit from the Capitol. So if you don’t have that permit, you will not be able to bring the materials here through the checkpoint to repair your house.’

As president of the local homeowner association, Genita’s hopes of land tenure and housing security for her family and her members fuelled her determination and unwavering commitment to lobby the government and fight for change:

‘This picture [see Figure 6.2 bottom] is the house from one of my members. As you can see, it is really quite in need of repair. My dream is for my members not to have

to apply for any permits or sign waivers to be able to make a report on their house. If it rains, the water just goes into their house and there are children who are living there... I really hope that this family will be able to repair their house... For myself, what I am really hoping is that I will be able to repair my roof. That's it. For my family I would really like for us to own our own lot, because I am worrying that if I am gone, if I pass away, my children will not be secured with a house. For the community, it's just the same... And I think this is my biggest help, if our organisation will be successful regarding the land.'

*Source Figure 6.2 Risk, insecurity and housing repairs*



Source: Top photograph by Glenn, LMISKP, 2016; bottom by Genita, LMISKP, 2016.

#### **6.1.4 Homeowner associations and local risk management**

Whether because of the impasse over the waiver in Lower Mahiga, or due to financial constraints as in Laguerta, residents' inability to repair their houses was exacerbating their everyday encounters with risks. Equally, as revealed in my analysis of risk hybridity in Chapter 4, cycles of fire, demolition and displacement, also aggravate and reinforce circumstances of vulnerability and insecurity among the urban poor. Respondent testimonies presented in this chapter highlight the various ways in which homeowner associations are working to reduce, manage and address risks within communities. This includes their advocacy efforts around land tenure insecurity, financial compensation and relocation support as well as their negotiations with the state for access to public services, basic infrastructure and site development. Homeowner associations' risk management functions also extend to the various tactics described by Jaime of setting up fire watch or *bantay sunog* groups (common in many settlements), and collecting photographic evidence of demolition activities to support residents' compensation claims. With support and guidance from FORGE and local DRRM offices, many homeowner associations have also set up DRRM and Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) owing to the geographic, environmental and infrastructural conditions that inhibit rapid response from state services in times of crisis, and past experiences of neglect (see Figure 6.3). Women and Children's Committees (WCCs) later renamed Family Development Committees, are another initiative of homeowner associations which raise local awareness of VAWC legislation and offer support and intervention around cases of domestic violence and child abuse in the community.

Figure 6.3 DRRM and emergency response team training



Source: Author's photographs, 2017.

In this light, although homeowner associations are not explicitly or conventionally portrayed as risk management institutions, I contend that in informal settlements, risk and insecurity are central to their mandates and activities, making them critical players in community-based risk reduction and management (CBDRRM) processes (Ramalho, 2018). That said, as depicted in their name, it is also important to recognise that homeowner associations also engender exclusions within communities that may serve to reinforce the vulnerability of certain groups. In abiding by the legal parameters set out in the Magna Carta for Homeowners and Homeowners' Associations which limits possibilities of membership to 'structure owners', the 'invited' nature of these organisations is reproduced locally, privileging homeowners at over renters and those living in extended kin arrangements. Such hierarchies inadvertently reinforce rather than challenge neoliberal ideals of private property and individual homeownership and related discourses about those who do and don't belong in a world-class city.

### **6.1.5 Contested modes of collective action**

As touched on in Chapter 3, homeowner associations are not the only types of people's organisations that are working to address issues of risk and insecurity in informal

settlements. In contrast to FORGE'S approach of working alongside the government to address urban poor issues and identify solutions, some organisations adopt a more confrontational approach to mobilising for change around land tenure and other socio-political injustices. These include organisations such as BAYAN<sup>62</sup>, KADAMAY<sup>63</sup>, and sectoral organisations under Anakpawis,<sup>64</sup> the political party representing marginalised groups in congress, who campaign, inter alia, for workers' rights and genuine agrarian reform in the Philippines.

As UP Professor and local activist Bebot Sanchez explained, KADAMAY:

'...is the Tagalog word for compatriot... organised on the issue of anti-demolition... we educate the community based on the issue and then you need to defend... [Y]ou cannot be a member [of KADAMAY] unless you go through the orientation. And the orientation will start with the exodus in the rural community, and when you came here, you were shunted to what. You have to tell your history as a community. Only then will you be accepted in the confederation or in KADAMAY, only if you have established your history in written form, and signed by your members. That is actually our formal system. We do not go through government...

*Panaghugpong* [applies] constant conflict confrontation strategy, meaning that every month, we always schedule a mobilisation to city government, and then we always set up the media on a specific schedule and the people on a specific schedule,

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<sup>62</sup> BAYAN (*Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* translating to 'New Patriotic Alliance'), are a coalition of left-wing organisations that ascribe to the principles of Marxism–Leninism–Maoism and participate in unarmed mass mobilisations to push for social and economic reform in the Philippines. They are driven by similar political philosophies to the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army, and the National Democratic Front who have been at the helm of armed struggles ongoing across the archipelago since the 1970s. BAYAN was also a key mobiliser of national mass resistance and civil disobedience movements against the Marcos dictatorship that eventually led to the regime's downfall in 1986 (see <http://bayan.ph/index.php/what-is-bayan/brief-history/>).

<sup>63</sup> KADAMAY (*Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap* translating to 'the Federation of Mutual Aid for the Poor') is a national urban poor movement in the Philippines. In March 2017, KADAMAY came into the media's spotlight after it organised a mass occupation of 5208 empty social housing units in Pandi, Bulacan (near Metro Manila) by houseless and landless urban poor, demanding the provision of free social housing in place of existing schemes such as the CMP that require payments through monthly amortisations (see <http://bulatlat.com/main/2017/03/14/occupybulacan-urban-poor-group-vows-continue-barricade-govt-housing-projects/> and <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/880607/duterte-told-organized-occupation-of-bulacan-housing-units-not-anarchy>).

KADAMAY's local chapter in Cebu is also known by the name *Panaghugpong sa mga Kabus nga Taga Dakbayan sa Sugbo* (translating to 'the Confederation of Urban Poor Dwellers in Cebu').

<sup>64</sup> Anakpawis (*anak pawis*, translating to 'offspring of the labouring class') the is the party-list of radical trade unionists from the May First Labour Movement (*Kilusang Mayo Uno*) and the peasant movement (*Kilusang Mangbubukid ng Pilipinas*) associated with in political activism and mass protest to push for change in the Philippines. The marginalised sectors represented by Anakpawis include the urban poor, contracted workers, vendors, public transportation drivers, rural peasants and fisher-folk, Though they stand as an independent party, Anakpawis (and its sectoral organisations) are seen to be affiliated with communist ideals (if not movements) in the country.

to come to the front side of City Hall, and we have our banners and our cause. And either, we discuss about public utilities that are not well distributed, or we talk about the housing programme of the poor and the right of the poor to the city. Because everyone has a right to the city. And you cannot just say that you know, you are a poor so you have to go back home [to your province]. Because, Rama's administration they have a line that is saying that you do not come from the city so we will get money and funding to send you back home. And that is crazy. Because what are we going to do at home when we cannot eat. So we are here because at least the city has everything that they can have. Ok, they can be artisans here. Well, if they go back home there is no land to till, and there are no big markets similar to the city market... [Y]ou cannot just discriminate against people and tell them "you are poor, you don't have the right to live in the city." All the more we have the right to live in the city.'

Although several such organisations are represented or affiliated with Anakpawis and therein are operating within an 'invited' arena, as Cornwall (2002: 4 citing Lefebvre, 1991: 110) contends, participative forums must also be understood and evaluated in relation to their 'generative past(s)', referring to the context and means through which they were created (Gaventa, 2002: 7). The adoption of a 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 1970, 1973) approach to community organising as a starting point, and subsequently deploying a strategy of 'constant conflict confrontation' through mass mobilisations and protest in direct opposition to the political machinery and jurisdiction of the state, seems to locate these organisations more within the realm of 'invented' spaces (Miraftab, 2004). As further evidence of a difference in the 'generative pasts' of organisations such as FORGE and KADAMAY, a statement taken from KADAMAY's website reads:

'KADAMAY maintains that evictions should be at the bottom of the list of options if we are to endeavour for genuine on-site and community development. Staying inside the cities and working through it is a matter of right that needs to be recognized and harnessed. This can be done by rejecting Public-Private Partnership [PPP] projects that has been the driving policy in much of the forced evictions of recent years. Throughout the world PPP programmes have been adopted by neo-liberal technocrats and governments as a tool to oppress communities in favour of an injudicious development track. We urge the Duterte administration to do away with PPP projects and instead increase government participation in the delivery of services, including safe and affordable housing.'<sup>65</sup>

Whereas FORGE supports the urban poor to negotiate improved terms for their eviction and relocation, KADAMAY's stance is to resist eviction at all costs, and to push for greater state accountability in the provision of development programmes. This is largely driven by the common tendency for hidden agendas to be cloaked in PPPs, reinforcing the arguments

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<sup>65</sup> News Release, 5 August 2016, 'On the SONA: Urban poor groups welcome 'no demolitions,' root causes of poverty still to be addressed' <http://kadamay-natl.blogspot.com/> (accessed 3 October, 2018).

advanced in Chapter 5 in the context of my analysis of the Mega Cebu project and the socio-spatial implications of disaster risk governance policies.

Debates on the benefits and shortcomings of different approaches to collective action and political advocacy campaigning are at the helm of much grassroots activism globally, and the Philippines is clearly no exception to this. When I asked FORGE's Executive Director, Ruth Restauero, about FORGE's position on these divergences, she said:

'We had our time where we were more... militant and we didn't deal with government but we have had some process of reflection within the organisation and we said it is not time any more to just expose and oppose. So we now moved into proposing how things should be done. Because in just exposing the issues and then opposing the government, we haven't gone so far in addressing the issues of the urban poor, because we are just doing things on our own and not involving government... Only government I think can sustainably address the issue of the urban poor because they will forever be there... So we decided that we expose, we oppose and then we propose. That is why we are engaging with the government. We see it as very important that we influence the government in terms of how things should be done properly with the people, because they will sustain our work. We will not forever be there.'

On the amortisation of public land and site development costs in urban poor communities, FORGE's:

'...stance... is that we do not want our communities to develop dependencies, either with government or with us. They must be able to stand on their own. So we are fine with them paying back what they get from government, because if you look at the number of people that need to be helped even just here in Cebu City, it is vast. The budget of the city cannot afford to pay and give them all the lots that they need. And so if you acquire something from the government, pay it back, but you should not be charged with more and more [interest]. And then, that payment that you give back to the government must be used to continue the service for other urban poor organisations to also be able to avail. So it is like you are helping the other urban poor organisations to be able to avail what you have availed from government and have paid back. So that is the theory. And it is part of the empowerment framework that we are trying to impart with our [urban poor] partners. You don't depend on anybody else but your own organisation and collective action.'

Herein lie the core ideas that ground and differentiate the approaches of FORGE and KADAMAY. Both are working to secure more a more just and equitable future for the poor and believe that the state (should) be involved in improving the welfare of marginalised groups. The former work alongside the government to try to influence it from within, by providing communities with the legal and technical knowledge and tools needed to be able to voice their demands and engage with the state and private sector through the legislated means and structures to negotiate a better deal for themselves. However despite operating from within so to speak, they seem reticent to trust in the state, and consequently encourage

communities to be self-reliant and limit their dependence on state handouts and support, which in the context of social housing and DRRM, aligns with prevailing ideas underpinning neoliberal models of governance. The latter conversely reject these ideals and are fighting for mass social and economic reform, with land redistribution at the heart of these matters, arguing for example that the poor should not have to pay to reside on public land, but rather that socialised housing should be free to compensate the history of injustice, oppression and exploitation underpinning existing land struggles and class inequalities. As plainly articulated by Bebot:

‘Our [KADAMAY’s] critique to the mass socialised housing programme, is that it is not pro-poor. It rather criminalises the poor in the end [when they cannot pay]. So what is the purpose of a programme that pushes the people into dire need all the more, and then call it socialised? That is our basic question. I would say it should be repealed.’

Her position mirrors that of Arcillia (2018: 77) who argues that:

‘...not only do housing PPPs privatise profits and socialise risks and costs, [but] these also strengthen the state housing agency’s efficacy as an instrument of neoliberal governance... Through the socialised housing programme, a systematic spatial, political, and economic displacement of the poor is institutionalised to facilitate private gain and commodify housing for the poor.’

While political strategies differ as a consequence of their reformist (FORGE) and abolitionist (KADAMAY) ideals, both strive to disrupt and transform existing configurations of power that uphold the status quo with the intention of securing a better deal for the poor, and, through their actions, are contributing to changing the system, making them dialectically interconnected as political projects. In other words, their politics are different but both are political. This analysis of grassroots collective action in Metro Cebu complicates Cornwall’s (2002) delineation of ‘invited’ and ‘popular’ spaces of participation, and invites further reflection on the political possibilities enabled through different forms of community organising. The above discussion of KADAMAY and other parallel forms of community-based activism is important to draw attention to the diversity of urban poor organisation in Metro Cebu, and the political tensions that exist within the realm of grassroots political participation.

## ***6.2 Risk, gender and participation***

### ***6.2.1 Gendered participation in homeowner associations***

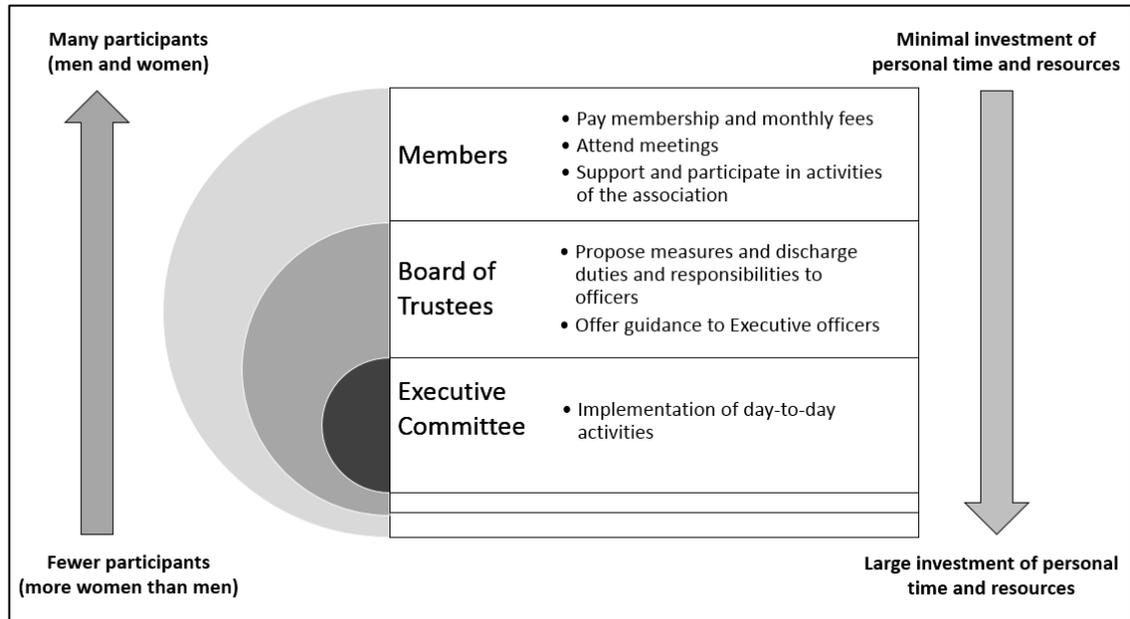
Having outlined the relationship between everyday risks and the establishment of homeowner associations in informal settlements, this section explores gendered dynamics

of participation within these organisations. As previously highlighted, respondents unanimously identified risks associated with land tenure and housing, namely the threat of demolition and eviction, as the primary reason they decided to join their homeowner association. Although this motivation applies equally to both male and female respondents, my analysis in Chapter 4 revealed distinct gendered perceptions of financial (in)security, with women describing heightened feelings (and realities) of livelihood fragility and financial dependence compared with their male counterparts. Subtle differences in gendered perceptions also emerged in discussions about risks emanating from infrastructural deficiencies, including waste disposal and consequent flooding, electricity, water, and road and transportation links. Here women's concerns tended to revolve around the health, safety and wellbeing of their children and partners associated with dengue, waterborne illnesses, road accidents, and exposure to violence, whereas men expressed particular concern over the impacts of infrastructure inadequacies on their livelihoods and income-generating potential. As previously argued, gendered mobilities as an extension of gendered roles and identities offer a reasonable explanation for these differences in how women and men speak about and internalise risk and insecurity. With women typically more confined to the domestic realm in their reproductive and productive roles, and whose gendered identities are often tied to the home, their interests in issues that threaten or affect this environment is perhaps of little surprise. However, as I argue below, these gendered differences in perceptions of (and exposure to) risk are intrinsically connected to participation in homeowner associations and their associated risk management activities.

Homeowner associations consist of members (usually one individual per household) and officers (including the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee) who are elected from the membership base to undertake different roles relevant to each association's mandates and priorities. The Board of Trustees oversee the functioning of the association, proposing measures and discharging duties to the Executive Committee (typically consisting of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and auditor), who lead on the day-to-day running of the association and implementation of initiatives. This includes chairing and organising meetings and community events, collecting membership fees, mediating interpersonal conflicts among members and representing the community in meetings or negotiations with the government or outside parties (see Figure 6.4). The latter sphere of work is particularly demanding of time, patience and energy, involving weekly visits to City Hall, often at the officers' own expense, to follow-up on paperwork, projects or inquiries with different government departments. As relayed to me by Genita after I bumped into her unexpectedly at City Hall: 'Normally I have to go to City Hall at least once

a week.' She and other officers told me that they would often be made to wait for hours before being seen, only to be told to come back again the following week.

Figure 6.4: Homeowners association structure and gendered distribution of duties



At the time of my field research, in four of the five study sites, Executive Committee officials were almost all women, though interestingly, in the outlier (SAHA), all bar one of these officers (the secretary) were men. Across all associations, male office-holding was more prominent in the Board of Trustees, though in several associations, women were still the majority. Feminised patterns of participation were also apparent in the organising efforts of CICC fire victims, as relayed by MUPHAI President Menchu (40): '[M]ostly it is women who attend these meetings [with the local government], like the camp leaders are mostly women, maybe 85 percent are women and 15 percent men. And the small group meetings are mostly attended by women. Women are more curious when it comes to meetings, they ask more detailed questions, and have more particular recommendations.' According to Laguerta resident Sally, the reason why women are the main participants in homeowner associations is: 'Because the women are always available, they are only plain housewives.' Echoing this perspective, SITAPRA President Marifel suggested:

'It is mostly women involved... because it is mostly women who are able to attend meetings. Also the officers are also mostly women. The reason I guess is because boys are always at work and it is the women who are always permanently staying at home, and those people who permanently stay at home usually are the ones who get to understand the situation first.'

In SAHA, where male officers far outnumbered women and which had much higher levels of male participation overall, Roger shared a similar reasoning that gendered livelihoods and mobilities were the main factor influencing participation:

‘The men here are more active than [other areas]... I think that is because... [in other areas] the men always go to work outside the community but here, the men are [working] here in the community... [or] close by. In my opinion, the main reason why men is the main one who actively participates, especially in the meetings, is because mostly our meetings, we are going to have it during the night times. The purpose is that even if they are working, they are able to attend it.’

Such explanations of feminised participation based on assumptions about gendered livelihoods and specifically, women’s ‘free time’, were reiterated to me time and time again, not only by community respondents, but also by government and civil society workers across the Philippines, whose outreach and community development programmes are often channelled through local homeowner associations. However among the cohort of respondents who participated in this study, these assumptions, though reproduced in their own narratives, did not hold up entirely, as many of the female and male officers were engaged in full and part-time employment both in and outside their communities, negating this as a key explanatory variable.

There are numerous social and political factors that are likely contributing to the gendered differences between these leadership bodies, including the personalities and charisma of local leaders, their existing social networks and peer groups, as well as the influence they command (and are perceived to have) in their communities and beyond. Not discounting the importance of these situated complexities in shaping local engagement in homeowner associations, there are some patterns in gendered participation that remain notable and require unpacking. Conventional gendered dynamics and hierarchies for example, may be reflected in the higher proportion of men participating in the Board of Trustees compared with the Executive Committee. The former is a less labour intensive role, but one with notable clout and authority in its de jure status as the decision-making body of the association. Women conversely, make up the majority of officers who are putting in the time and effort to carry out the bulk of associational activities. Given that in practice, the Board typically relies on the ideas and guidance from the president and vice president, the predominantly female executive committees are also the de facto drivers of decision-making.

Furthermore, in all five communities, including that with a majority male group of officers, women are the most visible and regular participants at community meetings, seminars and events. Such patterns of feminised rank-and-file participation in community

management and anti-eviction advocacy efforts are not unique to the Philippines, complementing the findings of scholars researching similar issues in other parts of Southeast Asia, and more globally (see for example Baxter and Brickell, 2014; Brickell, 2014; Moser, 1987, 2009; Tilley et al., 2019; Ward and Chant, 1987). Not discounting the influence of gendered livelihoods and mobilities on participation in homeowner associations, I argue that gender roles (including but not limited to livelihoods), norms and especially perceptions of risk (themselves shaped by the former as discussed in Chapter 4) are more significant in explaining the feminised character of rank-and file participation within these organisations. These dynamics are most apparent in the context of *bayanihan*.

### **6.2.2 Bayanihan**

Across many parts of Southeast Asia, acts of mutual assistance and collective action form a key feature of cultural identity and nationhood. In the Philippines, this tradition is enshrined in the concept of *bayanihan*, derived from the Tagalog word *bayan* meaning people or nation, which encompasses various acts of self-help organising at the grassroots neighbourhood level (Bankoff, 2007: 331). This practice of collective action extends to the realm of risk management, with Bankoff (ibid.) suggesting a direct link between hazard vulnerability and the emergence of what he terms ‘mutual benefit associations’ or social capital networks. Women have long been prominent actors in these networks of collective mobilisation and social capital (ibid.), which have in turn been fundamental to the establishment of community-based social assistance organisations in recent decades. Among the urban poor communities of Metro Cebu, examples of *bayanihan* or *tinabangay* as it is sometimes called in Cebuano, include communal efforts to gather and clear garbage from their neighbourhood and local waterways, as well as building and repairing public infrastructure such as roads or toilets, or supporting neighbours to make improvements to their homes. As Artemio explained it: ‘When you come together and help one another, they call that *bayanihan*... It is important because we are poor. We cannot pay carpenters, so we work by *bayanihan* only. We also have *bayanihan* cleaning of the drains every month.’ For SAHA member Bernadita (45): ‘*Tinabangay* is important so that we can solve problems.’ Alaska resident and ERT volunteer Jeffery (34) also saw *bayanihan* as critical to the community ‘because if we don’t help each other out, then we can’t do anything with our situation [as urban poor]. Nothing can be done or improved.’

According to respondents who currently or had previously served as officers, participation in monthly *bayanihan* is a responsibility of all homeowner association members, with those unable to attend expected to contribute financially to buying snacks

or materials in lieu of labour. However, collective burdens and duties are rarely shared in practice, a point reiterated with frustration by more active members, including Sitio Aroma resident Lorna (35): 'We call it *bayanihan*. But not all families participate. You cannot force them to clean.' Furthermore, according to my observations, which were also substantiated by respondent testimonies, in the context of mandated monthly *bayanihan* initiatives, women are typically the main 'volunteers', especially in waste-clearing initiatives which are both the most common, and arguably among the least appealing types of *bayanihan*. Interestingly however, *bayanihan* oriented around more stereotypically male domains, such as road and housing construction, or infrastructure maintenance including unblocking waste from drains or canals, attract notably more male participants, though women are still present as labourers and in the background doing the cooking. In Lower Mahiga where *bayanihan* includes cleaning and maintaining the communal spring, as well as clearing roads in the aftermath of landslides, Carol was of the opinion that the main participants were: 'Men. Because of the hard work [strength needed]... to clear the trees... like when a branch of the tree blocks the road, or the creek, the men are doing it. The women are helping and preparing the food... It is always the same group usually who volunteers.' Cheryl, (38) described the situation in her Laguerta neighbourhood thus:

'With this road construction [see Figure 6.5] some would say that the reason there are a lot of men doing it is because women are not capable of doing it but for me, I think it is really possible for us to help. But with cleaning [garbage] it is always women. It is like the men become women [weak] when it comes to cleaning [laughs]. Like they can't do it. But maybe they just don't like cleaning. With *bayanihan* is important that we help each other out. Because this is not just for one family or two families, but it is for the entire community. Everyone will benefit.'

Figure 6.5 Road construction through bayanihan in Laguerta



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

Both Carol and Cheryl's testimonies indicate that traditional gender norms continue to be an influential force defining the distribution of labour burdens within homeowner associations. Traditional ideas around gendered labour are also being reinforced by government narratives, with one high ranking local government official who helps facilitate community seminars telling me that waste 'segregation should start in the kitchen'; inadvertently marking waste management in informal settlements, often portrayed as the primary cause of flooding in the city (see Chapter 5), as women's responsibility. In these examples, gendered participation in *bayanihan* reproduces existing gendered power hierarchies based on essentialist stereotypes that designate specific domains and duties to women and men. This extends to DRRM and ERTs which attract significantly more male participants than other homeowner association activities, especially in search and rescue where those involved are almost entirely male, while women make up the majority of first aid and camp management volunteers who treat and assess local needs, injuries and damages, with responsibilities that continue long after the event itself. These divisions of labour correspond with Enarson's (2006: no page) observations in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, where men were particularly active in the highly visible, immediate rescue and clean-up and operations while the arduous labours undertaken by women in the longer term remained both 'exceptional and exceptionally invisible'.

In failing to directly acknowledge gendered distributions of labour in the reproductive sphere, these local risk management initiatives administered through homeowner associations are thus contributing to a 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' as discussed by Chant (2008), and reinforcing rather than redressing gendered power differentials and the stereotypes that underpin them. However, in line with my earlier claim that gendered perceptions of and encounters with risk (themselves shaped by gendered geographies and mobility) are also contributing to feminised participation in local risk management activities, one female Sitio Aroma resident reflected:

'There are many more women who join in [*bayanihan* compared to men]. I think this is because men are often in their jobs or working outside, but us women here, we are the ones who can see our surroundings or our environment. We are the ones who know what the problems are and what actions are needed here in our community... So that is why we have to work, not just for ourselves because... all of the people living here in the community will be affected. Not just by the floods, but the threat of mosquitos, and the garbage. All of this threatens our health. Where mostly men participate is cleaning or unplugging the canal from garbage, because men are the only ones who can reach the canals located under the houses [in the sewers].'

As further evidence of women's assumed 'closeness' to the community as they 'are the ones who know what the problems are and what actions are needed', and I would argue, also have more vested interests in health and other risks that threaten the home environment (see Chapter 4), several female respondents took photographs of themselves cleaning the local area (see Figure 6.6), with SAHA secretary Nilda for example, telling me:

'I usually clean the surroundings of my house, every other day, because I want the surroundings outside my house to be clean. This picture was taken during the morning after the rain, I decided to clean the pathway over there outside my house because of the accumulated trash, so I swept the area. After the rain there is always lots of trash that floats into the pathway so I always want to clean it.'

While *bayanihan* in the context of homeowner associations typically designates a specific set of interventions such as the waste-clearing and site maintenance activities described above, the spirit of volunteerism inherent to *bayanihan* extends beyond these initiatives to include the wider management of the associations.

Figure 6.6 Waste management through bayanihan



Source: Photographs by Nilda (left), SAHA, 2016, and Lorna (right), SAHA, 2016.

### **6.2.3 Sacrifice, obligation and the costs of participation**

Both female and male officers defined their work in the association as an act of volunteerism; one which gave them feelings of personal fulfilment, though in equal measure came with many personal costs. The majority of officers interviewed had been serving their association in one capacity or another for years, and in several cases, had personally instigated the establishment of their organisation. With the efficacy of the association entirely dependent on the initiative, investment and vision of its leaders, individuals who demonstrate commitment and achievements are regularly re-elected, sometimes despite their best efforts to stand down. As relayed by one female respondent, a married mother of seven who pioneered the establishment of her community's homeowner association more than ten years ago and has since been serving in the Executive Committee:

'Well it is a very tiring job for me. And I don't have any salary for it, but I wasn't able to do anything about it because people voted for me for the position. I have no choice... because even though I do a good job of hiding they can find me anywhere... I want to resign actually. But... they will not accept my resignation letter... so I can't do anything about it. So I just say so be it, I'll just do whatever is needed... In every election they keep on voting for me. Even if I am absent because of different excuses like "oh I have a fever or a stomach ache so I can't attend"... they will just reschedule the meeting so that I can attend... So my husband advised me to just attend because it is a hassle and they will just keep rescheduling the meeting until I attend.'

Her account echoes the tales of many other female officers, and mirrors findings in other studies of cyclical leadership patterns among the 'usual suspects' with 'burnout' being a common result (Gaventa, 2004: 13). In fact, several homeowner association members recounted the pressures and difficulties associated with being an officer; a point which made them happy to let others take the lead. In these conversations, the influence of gender norms on perceptions about (and participation in) leadership again featured prominently, though perhaps in a less conventional way than might be expected.

Many of the men I spoke with felt that women were better suited to being officers, as in addition to 'having more free time', women were deemed more literate, more diplomatic and better able to amicably resolve conflicts, all of which were considered integral to these leadership roles. Father of two Nelson (35) said: 'I don't like to be an officer, because it is difficult. It is troublesome because if you are an officer you need to go out to different places all the time and deal with many many problems like the budgeting and also hard-headed people [conflict].' Jaime (57) felt similarly:

'Well I really don't know how to read and write. But even if I could, I would only want to be a member... These officers have their own *gubot* [conflict] with each other... I think that most of the men here are just contented to become members. I am not sure [why]... but they usually decide only to participate as members and allow women to be active and do the actions here in the community.'

These reflections suggest that men may feel less confident about their ability to fill the role, indicating a possible and as yet unacknowledged area for gendered capacity building. In equal measure however, it is also clear that male members are very aware of the extensive time and labour burdens for officers, and are choosing to opt out of these responsibilities, culminating in a degree of gendered free-riding as they share in collective benefits accrued through the efforts of (predominantly female) officers. This is not to say that this is an inherently gendered process, as many female members also benefit from the initiative of officers and equally choose not to participate in *bayanihan* for similar reasons to those cited above. Second-hand evidence from female partners also suggested that some men would like to be more involved in their association, but were limited in their ability to do so because of the timing of activities clashing with their work outside the settlement, with Janet stating: 'My husband cannot attend the meetings because he is always at work. It is not a problem for him, me going there and volunteering. We share that same feeling that we want to volunteer but for him it is impossible because he has to work.'

Women's inherent aptitude for the undertakings required of officers was also suggested by female respondents including Carol:

'...the reason why women participate more... is because they are more patient [than men]. I can't imagine that my husband would fall in line for a whole day like we have to do when we go to City Hall or any other government offices. Women are more into serving the association than men. It is OK for the Board of Trustees to consist of men mostly, because they only stay sitting down. They don't need to have the patience to do what women do as officers, so many meetings out and about and seminars. Men cannot be bothered with all of this, because most of them would be working.'

Carol's reference to female servitude echoes the frequently projected global gender myth of women being 'naturally' more altruistic than men, though as Brickell and Chant (2010) importantly highlight, women are socialised into altruistic behaviours. In any case, this statement serves as another example of the ways in which gendered norms and identities manifest as, and are simultaneously reinforced by, feminised participation in homeowner associations and voluntary work more broadly. Here, Filipino religiosity, and specifically the idolisation of Mother Mary and Santo Niño (baby Jesus), also appeared to be influencing gendered participation in *bayanihan* (and female servitude more generally), as suggested by Daya:

'That is Mama Mary in the picture. All of the problems in the home and in the community, I try to be responsible for them. I feel responsible for them. And that is the same with Mama Mary. I carry all of the problems of the people and people go to me with their problems and so I try to help them. So that is why I chose to take this picture of Mama Mary... I think that of the pictures that I took, the picture of Mama Mary [see Figure 6.7 left] symbolises *bayanihan*. Because she is of course a mother, so it is like she is a mother of the community. Whatever problems the community has, she is ready to help always. I think mothers here in our community are like Mama Mary, helping each other out.'

Another respondent, Tata, stated:

'This is a picture of the Mama Mary, the Santo Niño and the divine mercy [see Figure 6.7 right]. This is taken at my altar in my house. Every morning, I pray to them... I believe that if you keep on helping other people, it's not that your blessings will come from them or that you will get something from them in return, but the Lord will give to you in other ways.'

Cheryl shared similar sentiments: 'I think the Lord helps me so I need to be always in action since he is helping me.' Reference to faith also featured in the testimonies of some male respondents, though bar two individuals, these discussions omitted any reference to religion informing their moral conduct. These narratives suggest religion to be a more prominent behavioural influence among women, reinforcing well-documented interdisciplinary findings of a relationship between religiosity and social roles including age, gender, and social status, with 'women... everywhere' being 'more committed to religion' (Beit-Hallahmi, 2004: 117-8).

Figure 6.7 Mother Mary and bayanihan



Source: Photographs by Daya (left), TAHAS, 2016, and Tata (right), TULHOA, 2016.

Thinking back to ten steps of community organising and the central role of church-based organisations in the ideology and mobilisation of this form of collective action, it is unsurprising that gendered codes of conduct associated with the Christian faith have permeated the fabric of homeowner associations. Indeed, the principles inherent to the community organising process hinge on an ethic or moral code that unites individuals around shared values relating to democratic participation, active citizenship, self-reliance, and empowerment. Value formation is not unique to community organising but is also embedded in the national curriculum as part of broader nation-building efforts by the state. Rooted in biblical teachings, these classes seek to institute ‘desirable’ attributes and behaviours in pupils, with the goal of developing people who are ‘committed to building a free, democratic, peaceful, and progressive nation’ (Quisumbing, 1994: 4, 9). Though these principles are not explicitly gendered, exercises in value orientation encourage self-discipline, altruism and responsibility for one’s family and community, all of which are intimately connected with gendered norms and divisions of productive and reproductive labour. In the context of urban poor homeowner associations, respondent narratives show that these attributes are being assumed and performed differently by women and men.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the Philippines, the gendered costs of participating in CBDRRM and other ‘bottom-up’ interventions are grossly under acknowledged, and the notable absence of men compared to women, is neither questioned nor problematised by government, civil society, or even the communities themselves. Instead, this accepted reality is typically dismissed with the explanation that men are ‘busy at work’, and women are unemployed and have ‘lots of extra time’ to attend meetings and participate in community activities. However, as mentioned above, among respondents who participated in this study, while it was true that more women were out of work than men, many of the male and female officers were employed in either full or part-time work in both formal and informal sectors, negating time and employability as intrinsic to under-participation. Not only does this claim accordingly fail to hold up to empirical scrutiny, but it also devalues women’s volunteerism and unpaid contributions to their households and communities. Furthermore, such assumptions excuse men from participating in communal activities rather than encouraging their involvement and trying to address barriers to their participation. Given the prominent role of homeowner associations as networks of information exchange on issues pertaining to the security and wellbeing of their communities, it is arguably crucial to identify obstacles to inclusion that may discourage men from engaging in these spaces, particularly in the context of male-headed single parent households, whose potential isolation from these networks may be a source of vulnerability.

#### ***6.2.4 Narratives of empowerment***

On the basis of the analysis of gendered participation in homeowner associations offered so far, it would seem that the cautions about a ‘feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation’ in development (Chant, 2008) and increasingly in disaster recovery (Bradshaw 2013; 2015) are especially relevant to community organising and associated (disaster) risk management interventions among the urban poor of Cebu if not the Philippines in general, where women’s time and labour investments in community affairs seem to far surpass those of their male counterparts. However, a closer analysis of women’s personal narratives reveals a somewhat different picture, with women describing their experiences of volunteerism, and specifically their involvement in homeowner associations, using a language of empowerment. Many told me how their participation gave them a sense of self-worth, expanded their knowledge, mobility and confidence, and helped them develop skills and build social networks, all of which contributed to a growth in their sense of agency and independence. As described to me by retired officer and active member Sally:

‘It is not only about wanting to help out in the organisation or with the community. But for me it [the homeowner association] is a very big help, because... I know about

my human rights and learned for myself about what is good for me. Before... understanding my rights... I was just scared of people coming to us [and threatening eviction]. And also I really didn't know how to respond... or what to say to them to defend myself. I was very shy and really didn't want to interact with these people [in government] or have meetings with them, because for me I really felt myself as lower than them so I was embarrassed... But now after all these trainings... all my fears and all my worries were put aside and I was able to defend myself.'

On the back of becoming more active in their homeowner association, several female respondents went on to secure paid employment, some in local government or offshoot livelihood programmes, thanks to the skills and contacts they had acquired from volunteering and specifically from FORGE's seminars. Describing herself as a 'plain housewife' before she started volunteering, MUPHAI President, Menchu, who was instrumental in the establishment of her homeowner association, secured work as a community organiser with the Mandaue City government. She also sits on the boards of several urban poor and women's organisations, making her a known-name in municipal urban poor affairs. As another indicator of transformative gender empowerment, the distribution of unpaid labour is now shared in her household, contravening traditional gender norms: 'This is a picture of my husband [see Figure 6.8] He prepared and cooked for the birthday celebration for my niece... [He] is actually the main cook, I am only the assistant cook. He also washes the dishes and helps with the laundry. He cannot find work<sup>66</sup> so he is a house husband and helps me a lot.' Menchu recounted how when she first became more active in community affairs (following the fire in March 2007 that destroyed over 1000 homes and subsequently prompted the establishment of MUPHAI in 2008), her husband was resistant and would get angry with her for coming in late and spending so much time away from home, especially as she was not bringing in a salary:

'I went through a transformation adjusting my life in this set up... [Now] we are partners. My husband is very supportive of all the things that I do. He is very understanding and has patience... I often boost his self-esteem because most of the time he has this self-pity. Because here in the Philippines... it is the husband that is... the breadwinner, but in our case it is the opposite... What I... try to get him to understand is that we are a family so we are partners and we must work together... [B]efore he didn't understand our situation... so he would often drink but now he has come to accept the fact.'

Similar changes in confidence and consciousness vis-a-vis rights and personal agency were recounted by MUPHAI officer Mutya (39):

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<sup>66</sup> In 2008, her husband lost his job in a Tupperware factory after over 13 years of employment. From 2008-2011 he had irregular work installing air conditioners as a subcontractor, and has been a stay at home father since.

'Before I joined [the association]... I was always angry or... disappointed in my life, but when... I [started] to volunteer, and to attend these seminars and trainings, there was really a change in me... One of the greatest differences... was that I was challenged. I got the advice that even as a mother, I need to be very independent... That's why even though my husband really didn't want me to join the livelihood programme, because for him it is an insult because he wants to be the sole breadwinner... I did it. Because I really want to be independent and earn my own money... I now know that as a woman I have these rights, and even though your husband wants you to do these things, if you don't like it, then you have the choice not to do it.'

*Figure 6.8 Working as partners and changing gender norms*



Source: Photograph by Menchu, MUPHAI, 2016.

Other women told me that upon learning about legislation prohibiting violence against women and children, they stood up to their abusive partners, either by leaving or threatening to put them in jail if the abuse continued. Through Family Development Committees, women (and men) also started collectively intervening in local cases of domestic abuse, providing support to victims and signposting both victims and perpetrators to information and services, as depicted by Marfiel: 'Organising has been important for women because, for example, there are battered women here or children that get abused. For example with [names member], she used to be a battered wife but then after she joined the WCC it stopped.' Janet, a WCC volunteer in Laguerta relayed a similar experience:

'[O]ne of the women was beaten up and so we called the police and coordinated with the barangay. And then we went there and one of the big members of the group was able to stop him from being wild and violent. So what happened was they had a settlement. He signed an agreement that if ever this happens again he will go to prison. After that incident, they remained together and there have been no more fights.'

as did MUPHAI Vice President, Juanillia (53), who has been organising VAWC orientations:

'In the trainings... we encourage the men to attend and most importantly women so that they know what are their rights and what they should do if this happens. For the men, it is also an advantage for them to hear the side of the women so that they will also know how to react... and take action. The difference now is that men are afraid to abuse or hurt their wives, because they know that they might get into trouble.'

These transformative accounts are not to be romanticised and do not reflect everyone's experiences, but equally should not be dismissed as they reveal very tangible and important outcomes for the women and households concerned.

My analysis of the causes and consequences of gendered participation in homeowner associations reveals the complex and seemingly paradoxical dynamics entangled in local risk management interventions administered through community organisations. I have shown participation to be shaped by existing norms and power relations premised around gendered stereotypes, perceptions of, and vulnerability to risk. I have also argued that homeowner association activities are inadvertently reinforcing a 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' (Chant, 2008) that translates to a 'feminisation of (disaster) risk management' (see Bradshaw, 2013: 155). However women's personal narratives reveal numerous benefits amassed through their participation in homeowner associations, including new skills and knowledge, improvements in their self-esteem, and broadened mobility and social networks. Such benefits owe much to the presence and ongoing support of FORGE, who facilitate and fund these training and social networking events, and who provide ongoing guidance and support to association leaders to help them sustaining their activities. These accounts from female officers highlight the complexities inherent to personal and collective journeys of empowerment and the moments that they identify as critical within this ongoing process of transformation, reinforcing existing literature on transformative gendered empowerment that identifies expansions in women's resources, social and political agency, and capacity to make decisions and take action for themselves, as critical markers of the shift in power relations inherent to these processes (Cornwall, 2016; Cornwall and Edwards, 2010; Eerdewijk et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999, 2008).

Women's testimonies also reinforce Cornwall and Edwards's (2010: 1) assertion that 'empowerment is a complex process that requires more than the quick and easy solutions often offered by development agencies', as '[m]uch of the significant change happening in women's lives takes place outside of the range of these conventional interventions.' In the context of this research, homeowner associations do not self-identify as feminist, nor are they publicly recognised as women's movements or having a particular concern for women's interests per se, yet they emerge as critical sites of female empowerment. Following from this latter point, although the primary aim of this study has been to understand and evaluate the causes and consequences of gendered participation in community-based risk management activities, class politics and specifically land tenure inequalities are central to the official mandates of these organisations. In the final section of this chapter, I consider the extent to which homeowner associations are affecting transformative outcomes in the classed struggles of risk and land tenure insecurity that prompted their establishment, and resisting or reshaping the exclusionary political landscape described in Chapter 5.

### ***6.3 Land tenure struggles and strategies of resistance***

#### ***6.3.1 'Invited spaces' and strategies of political resistance***

Homeowner associations constitute 'invited spaces' (Cornwall, 2002, 2004a) of participation in the sense that they are state-sanctioned institutions, mandated as an appropriate or legitimate mode of community organising and political engagement among informal settlers. Engagement in homeowner associations is actively encouraged by government departments working with the urban poor, and enthusiastically promoted as a mechanism of participatory governance and grassroots resilience-building that will enable the poor to become 'empowered'. These 'invited spaces' of collective action can be distinguished from 'popular' (ibid.) or to use Mirafteb's (2004: 1) term, 'invented spaces', which are produced through initiatives 'from below' that explicitly challenge 'the status quo in the hope of larger societal change and resistance to the dominant power relations'. Although the establishment of homeowner associations certainly relies on the proactivity of individuals within communities, the fact that local leaders are usually encouraged and supported to organise by NGOs such as FORGE, or government agencies such as DWUP, PCUP and HUDO, with the specific intention of enabling them to negotiating with the government, further situates this type of participation within the realm of 'invited spaces'.

According to Chambers (1994: 1-2), for participatory processes to be true to their name, there must be 'a transfer of power from "uppers" - people, institutions and disciplines

which have been dominant, to "lowers" - people, institutions and disciplines which have been subordinate'. In the absence of this reversal of power relations, he contends that labels of participation are nothing more than 'cosmetic' or 'co-opting' efforts to secure public buy-in or deliver low-cost development using local labour and resources with minimum outside assistance. However the power relations and binary distinctions between 'uppers' and 'lowers' or state and community are often more blurred and complex than this assertion would imply, and as Cornwall (2002: 4) contends, these spaces are fraught with contestation and power dynamics that operate within and across scales. Through the examples provided below, I showcase this complexity by examining the diverse ways in which homeowner associations operate as sites of contestation to politics and practices that adversely affect them. After offering some reflections on the possibilities and constraints to transforming power relations that exist therein, I close the chapter with the story of MUPHAI's fight for justice in the aftermath of the 2016 fire; a case that draws together the key themes of risk and gendered participation in politics of resistance, and which shows how invited spaces are subverted from within, disrupting the idea that 'invited' and 'invented' spaces are necessarily distinct.

In Lower Mahiga, where residents were contemplating the implications of the waiver against their needs for home repair, respondents told me about a heightened presence of police and provincial authorities in the area, and described various forms of harassment which they felt were being deployed as a mark of state power with the intention of dissuading residents from staying there. LMISKP President, Genita, being well-informed on squatters' rights and the legal due process of demolition thanks to trainings provided by FORGE, was often at the forefront of these conflicts and acts of resistance. Recounting one such case when a resident accused by the state of 'illegal' construction turned to the association (Genita) for support:

'This [see Figure 6.9] is a makeshift house, and the policemen just came into it... and they wanted to take down the house. They didn't want this woman to live there, they don't allow it, so they want to destroy the house, for it to be demolished. This happened while she was inside the house... last Sunday. I was just cleaning in my area and someone just came to me and told me that the police were there and trying to destroy the house. When I reached the house, the policemen left and I saw the owner crying. They didn't knock at the door, they just went inside and the owner was sleeping so she was really surprised and they told her that "you need to dismantle the house and destroy it, because you are not allowed to live here." It appears that a neighbour here reported this house... [to] the councillor [who] reported it to the Capitol [provincial government]. That is why the policemen came. They kept on coming every weekend, every Saturday or Sunday so I am assuming that the neighbour is jealous of this woman, and that is why he reported her... I asked the policemen how they can come here with no papers or anything. They came here three times but had no documents or files. Then last Sunday, I wasn't able to go

there, so they were able to go into her house. The woman just kept on crying. She is really afraid. She is a single mom and she doesn't have any parents.'

Somewhat confused by the situation given that all structures in the settlement, as far as I knew, had been erected 'illegally' given their absence of a title deed, I asked Genita what law had been broken that differentiated this structure from others. She explained that alongside the waiver, the provincial government had introduced a regulation prohibiting new houses from being constructed in the area.

'When I went to the Capitol, I asked for the implementing rules, to have a copy for us because we really don't know what is this implementing rules, but they told us that they haven't finished the document or the policy yet, that is why it cannot be implemented here yet. It is not finalised, so there is no violation... The Capitol is really trying to control the number of people who are living here and settling here because it will be difficult for... them to demolish houses if there is a bigger population here, if ever there is a relocation.'

Genita raised this case with the Capitol, arguing that that since this individual was a member of the homeowner association who had been living in the area for many years, this rule did not apply to her.

*Figure 6.9 A makeshift tarpaulin house targeted for demolition*



Source: Photographs by Genita (left), LMISKP, 2016 and by the author (right), 2016.

In the absence of the homeowner association, and specifically, of Genita's knowledge of the law and confidence to challenge the police and request the implementing rules from the province to highlight this act as a violation, it is likely that this resident's structure would have been demolished. Around the time of fieldwork, the provincial government had also

been erecting fence posts around people's homes, an apparent attempt to intimidate residents and reclaim the land by demarcating spaces of exclusion that urban poor residents could/could not traverse and inhabit (see Figure 6.10). This material display of power and spatial segregation serves as a daily reminder to local residents of their subordinate status and rights to the land. Sharing her thoughts on the injustice of class discrimination routinely affecting her and her neighbours, Carol told me of a rule recently introduced by Maria Luisa outlawing people from walking around the estate:

'There was a memorandum [passed] wherein people were not supposed to walk, to prevent people who don't belong here from being here, including house maids. And they do not allow *habal-habal* either, so they would need to get a taxi. Or maybe their bosses will come and get them. The community here asked the help of the barangay for *habal-habal* to be allowed to pass through the estate, but Maria Luisa said that it will only be possible if you have a silencer for your exhaust... That is why we want to get a bridge made or a road of our own... then we can use that and still go by *habal-habal* in and outside... And if there is a fiesta in the community, and we want to have a videoke machine, Maria Luisa residents call the police to complain, but if Maria Luisa residents are having a party, nothing happens. There is discrimination between the rich and the poor. Poor people can't fight back that easily because they [Maria Luisa] can do anything because they are the ones who have the money. The only thing that we can do is to try to secure the land so that our lots will be ours, and stay there for a long time, as much as possible by organising. Poor people don't have the right to make noise or sounds even. Poor people are not allowed to walk because it is their land. And you know the lake [referencing an area we had visited during one of my first visits to the community more than a year before]? It is a nice view right? But now it is only for them to see and enjoy.'

*Figure 6.10 Fence posts surreptitiously erected by the province around residents' homes*



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

The latter part of Carol's narrative citing their exclusion from seeing and using the lake concerns the rapidly expanding labyrinth of grey cement walls and barbed wire fencing erected by Maria Luisa to restrict urban poor residents to specific areas, namely a narrow path through the compound that eventually connects with a main road into the city (see Figure 6.11). Her testimony also reaffirms the everyday exclusionary politics of land use and mobility, which as touched on in Chapter 5, also feature in aspects of Mega Cebu's zoning proposals. However thanks to Genita's persistent advocacy with the Capitol on these issues, in 2017, Governor Davide visited Lower Mahiga, and after speaking with residents and observing the situation for himself, put an end to provincial fencing initiatives. He also spoke with Maria Luisa on behalf of the community to ask that the existing access path be widened and an additional road be constructed traversing the private estate to enable residents to enter and leave their area more easily, which Maria Luisa have agreed to. The barangay has also since put in lighting to help residents navigate the treed path at night; small but important concessions realised through the persistent efforts of homeowner association officers (particularly Genita) to make the government aware of their situation and resist the socio-political forces that seek to displace and/or render them less visible.

Figure 6.11 Barbed-wire fencing and walls along the access road bordering Maria Luisa



Source: Author's photographs, (left) 2016, (right) 2017.

When I met with Carol and Genita for an update on Lower Mahiga during my final visit in November 2017, one of the first things that I noticed was that Genita had repaired and extended the roof in her kitchen (see Figure 6.2, bottom). As we prepared a meal of chicken adobo together, I asked her what had made her change her mind and sign the waiver. Genita told me that in the year that had passed, with the help of FORGE, LMISKP had united with other urban poor communities through All POWER<sup>67</sup> (see Figure 6.12) who were living on provincially-owned land in Cebu City not included in the 93-1<sup>68</sup> land swap agreement, to negotiate a similar arrangement. These discussions were still ongoing,

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<sup>67</sup> The Alliance of People's Organisations Working for Empowerment and Resettlement (All POWER) is a coalition of urban poor community organisations, supported by FORGE, that collectively lobbies the government on urban poor affairs.

<sup>68</sup> 93-1 is a land swap agreement between the Provincial and Cebu City governments where provincially-owned lots in the city occupied by informal settlers will be exchanged for other parcels of municipal land. After nearly 30 years of negotiations, the MOA for 93-1 was passed in December, 2017 and the Deed of Donation and Acceptance signed by both parties on 2 August, 2018 (see <http://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/187466/landmark-93-1-land-swap-deal-signed-today>; <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1756105>) the outcome of which will enable urban poor beneficiaries to purchase their lots from the city for an affordable price.

however Genita felt confident (given that the current governor was 'pro-poor' as she put it) that should the province decide to sell the land, they would be given the opportunity to purchase their lot for a reasonable fee.

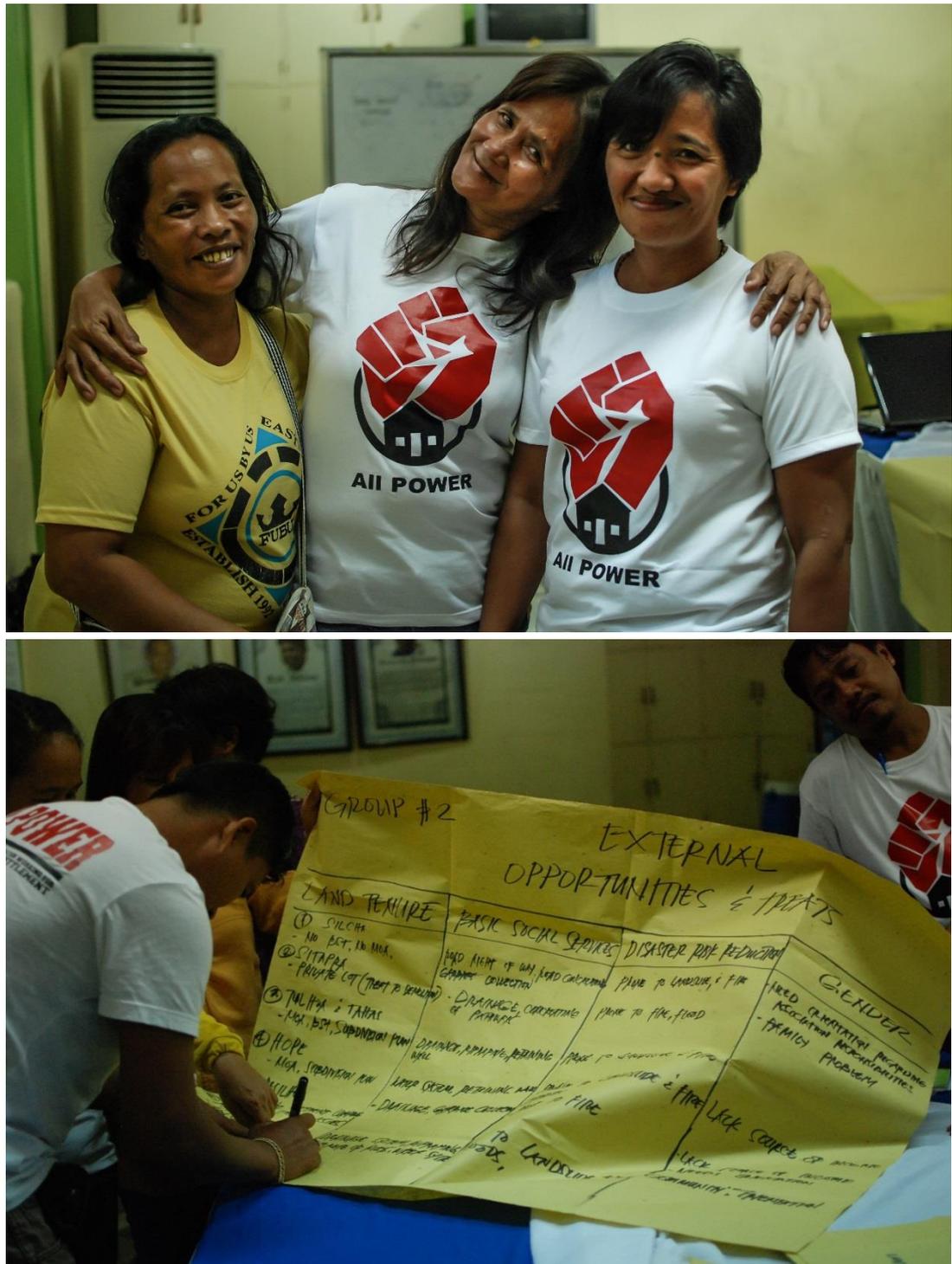
'We also have house tagging by DWUP to show that we are legal residents here in the lot. We are processing a letter of intent in order for us to buy the lot here and we have a MOA in progress and once we have the MOA signed, then they won't be able to take our lots so the waiver won't matter. We are confident that maybe next month, next month we will have a meeting... to let us know our status and if we can buy the land.'

She attributed the recent shift in government attitude both to the homeowner association's (i.e. her) persistent trips to City Hall to follow-up on their situation, and to the change in administration. In Carol's mind:

'If Governor Davide will not be re-elected... then probably things will change. We think that he is a really good governor, because he already assured us and said don't worry about your situation if you are an urban poor. If Davide will no longer be our governor, we have no idea what is going to happen or what will be the approach of the next administration. That is why FORGE is advising us to do this as quickly as possible. Because if we get a MOA, it doesn't matter what administration is in place, they cannot take it away',

to which Genita added 'As long as Tommy Osmeña and Davide are in place, it is OK because they are friends.'

Figure 6.12: All POWER members meet to discuss shared objectives and advocacy campaigns



Source: Author's photographs, 2016.

In the months after I left in October, 2016, homeowner associations in Laguerta, through All POWER, started lobbying the government to eliminate the interest penalties

accrued by residents living in city-owned resettlement sites. As relayed to me on my return visit in November the following year by FORGE community organiser Renil Bandiez-Oliva:

‘The penalty is almost the same as the price, so for them to pay the original price and annual interest of six percent they wanted to have an amnesty... [for] the penalty to be taken out of their bills. During their dialogue with Mayor Osmeña, he is willing... to... approve of the demand of All POWER, particularly those living in the relocation site, for amnesty on their penalties. But... Osmeña wanted to have a uniform payment of amortisation... across all the relocation sites... [of] 1500 pesos [USD 30]... per month, but that is too much... So All POWER consulted again their partners and they came up with the decision, and said OK, so we will go for 500 pesos [USD 10]... uniform per month, and the penalty will be taken out.’ Fortunately, Mayor Osmeña changed his proposal... of 1500 to 1000 [USD 20] but still it is so much for them to pay... All POWER is determined that 500 pesos will be the amount.’

After several months of negotiation, an agreement was reached of a uniform monthly repayment amount of 650 pesos [USD 13]. This is another example where the advocacy campaigns of homeowner associations have resulted in positive outcomes for urban poor in the city.

SITAPRA in Alaska Mambaling, who during my fieldwork were threatened with eviction from their coastal lot near the prestigious SRP development, had since been engaging in discussions with the private landowner and the city government to identify and negotiate a relocation site and adequate financial compensation (see Figure 6.13). SITAPRA identified a suitable area in a neighbouring barangay and lobbied the government to purchase it on their behalf (which residents would repay in monthly instalments similar to Laguerta’s arrangement). A compromise agreement was also reached with the private landlord whereby he would offer financial assistance of 10k-30k pesos (USD 200-600) per household, the amount depending on the size and quality of their structure. The successes of LMISKP, SITAPRA and All POWER more generally are evidence that homeowner associations do indeed offer a critical political platform for the urban poor to voice their needs and insert themselves into political spaces and discussions from which they are often excluded. Furthermore, these efforts constitute important acts of resistance regardless of whether the desired outcome is achieved or not. That said, as depicted in Carol and Genita’s reflections above, the political reach of homeowner associations and broader collective lobbies such as All POWER remain largely conditional on the appetite and interest of existing administrations to engage in dialogue and be open to change; a point which highlights limitations in the ability of homeowner associations operating through ‘invited’ channels to transform broader configurations of power in the city. To draw this chapter to a close, I conclude with an ethnographic vignette about MUPHAI’s fight for justice and transparency in the resettlement of fire victims, following a decision by the local

government to administer lots by way of a raffle; a story that draws together the key themes of risk, gendered participation in collective action and the politics of urban land tenure in Metro Cebu being interrogated in this thesis.

*Figure 6.13 SITAPRA members waiting for a meeting with the private landowner to negotiate the terms of their relocation*



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

### ***6.3.2 Fighting for justice in the aftermath of disaster: the story of MUPHAI and the CICC fire victims***

In the early hours of the morning on March 12, 2016, MUPHAI Vice President, Juanillia, woke to the sounds of neighbours shouting 'sunog' (fire), alerting her and other residents to grab what they could and evacuate the area. The fire, which spread rapidly across three sitios in barangays Guizo and Mantuyong and took more than four hours to extinguish, completely destroyed the homes and belongings of more than one thousand households. On a hot and humid sunny morning some four months after the fire, I visited Junillia at the CICC, the dilapidated convention centre whose parking lot was serving as a temporary relocation site for those displaced from the government-owned lot while the city reclaimed the fire-affected area. Sitting in the welcome shade of the makeshift wooden structure (see Figure 4.17, p. 161) that Juanillia had designed and constructed, she tells me that unlike many of her neighbours, she did not have to take out a loan to buy materials for this house, as her

partner who works in MEPSA had savings of 4000 pesos (USD 80) that they were able to use to rebuild the *sari-sari* shop, and the back room living quarters provisionally housing them, her niece and her sister's family. A small television in the corner playing videoke songs offers some background music to our conversation. Looking down at the TV, Juanilla remarks that she used to have speakers, an amplifier, an equaliser and three microphones, but these too were destroyed by the flames.

'The fire department didn't even use any water on our area because they said that it was too late for them to do anything about it. The fire started at 1am and they didn't arrive until after 2am. The area affected had both rich and poor families, so the fire department prioritised helping the rich areas first. They only worked to prevent the fire from spreading to the rich areas...The firemen stood near the Barangay Hall on standby, just in case the fire came that way they would be ready to stop it. They also went to the rich areas to stop it from spreading there. But ours just burned. I think some [houses] would have been saved if they had responded. We wanted to know why they didn't even try to stop the fire in our area, but they said that with their training that they get given, they assessed that it was impossible to do anything, especially because there was no right of way for them to access our area... If you are an informal settler or squatter in the Philippines, that is the usual response from the fire department. They say they cannot get into the area because there are too many houses too close together and narrow streets, so they just let it burn.'

Because she had been sleeping when the fire started, Juanillia said she was caught unprepared, but thankfully managed to rescue her rabbit, and the records and money from MUPHAI's sinking fund, a collective savings scheme set up and managed by the association for its members (see Figure 6.15). 'It would have been very difficult for us if we lost these documents' she said, bringing out a stack of papers to show me. MUPHAI's records and funds were kept in a bucket in her room so it had been easy to grab at the time. Unfortunately, however, she was not able to salvage her own savings of 46,000 pesos (USD 920), which were locked away in her *sari-sari* shop, and lost to the flames, alongside two fridges and a recently purchased freezer for the store. As she shows me the documents, a cat jumps onto the pile of papers and leans into Juanillia purring. 'This is Chinchin. When I went back to the lot after the fire, she just appeared from out of nowhere and jumped on me. I don't know what happened to the others' she says, referring to the four other cats she had prior to the fire, 'but I always look for them when I am back in the area.'

Figure 6.15 A public noticeboard with information about MUPHAI's collective savings scheme, displayed in Zone 3 before the fire



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.

Over the course of my main period of fieldwork and for several months thereafter, Junillia and the other fire victims remained at the CICC, patiently awaiting updates from the city on when they could return to their lot. During my final visit in November 2017, MUPHAI President Menchu, recounted the events that had taken place in the year that had passed:

‘They told us last year that we would be able to move home in December... but by November we knew that the situation was doomed, and in the end we celebrated Christmas at CICC. HUDO told us nothing. We had no news about what was going to happen from anyone. But in January there was hearsay that there would be a possibility of us returning, but that not all of us would be able to move back. So we were surprised when last 4 February, 2017, HUDO announced that they were going to have a meeting with all of us... fire victims including those who were living outside the CICC’.

At this meeting, which was led by representatives from PCUP and HUDO, those present were told that with the reblocking to create a road right of way and other residential zoning requirements, the site would only be able to accommodate 369 of the 900 plus households that had originally been living at CICC. When considered alongside the worlding and sustainability discourse underpinning the Mega Cebu urban development plan, and related efforts to clear informal settlements from 'danger zones', the decision to subdivide the lot in accordance with zoning regulations fits within the broader urban development agenda being promoted. The fire provided a perfect opportunity for the local government to transform this city centre lot from a space that previously projecting risk and disorder, into one that reflected the safety standards seen to be associated with a modern and global city.

To determine which 369 households would be allowed to move back onsite, the government declared that they intended to hold a raffle for the lots, in which only the 657 households identified as structure owners would be able to participate. Those structure owners who were not successful in the raffle, alongside renters, sharers and those who had been living on privately-owned lots would have the option of moving to a relocation site. The logic presented by government representatives was that the raffle was a fair and transparent way of distributing the limited number of lots to beneficiaries. To my mind, a more legitimate and fairer way to go about this might have been to distribute lots to the households that had been residing there the longest, using census data alongside neighbour testimonies to validate the authenticity of beneficiaries. However as revealed in Menchu's testimony below, the government's limited interactions with the victims in the year that had passed since the fire did little to suggest that fairness and legitimacy were key priorities in this process. Rather, complementing the numerous accounts of state neglect revealed to me by respondents from across the city, this seemingly last-minute decision to hold a raffle might more accurately reflect the pressure that HUDO was under by the new mayoral administration to allocate the lots quickly (given that they were months behind schedule) and start clearing people out of the CICC.

In this meeting, it also emerged that the government had been liaising with another homeowner association, FEDMACOPI, who were claiming to represent all fire victims. This organisation had allegedly signed a compromise agreement with the government, whereby on April 1<sup>st</sup>, the first 100 households who won lots in the raffle would transfer back to 'ground zero', as the fire site had come to be known. Menchu and the many others present at this meeting were left with more questions than answers. How did this fraudulent organisation FEDMACOPI (see Appendix C) come to speak on behalf of all fire victims, and why were legitimate homeowner associations not included in the dialogue with government

despite their frequent requests for an update? Furthermore, which families were to be included in the 657 'beneficiaries' identified by HUDO and where would remaining households be relocated to?

'We asked lots of questions... [but] [t]heir answers to those questions was just to say "that is why we are having this meeting, so you will let us know your concerns and what you need and then we can feed that back to the mayor." So they didn't answer our questions. It was like they just considered these questions as a comment and said "well taken and noted Ma'am."'

Menchu told me that in the year that had passed since the fire, the government had not done anything to validate households claiming to be fire victims, despite being given a list from MUPHAI of those living in Zone 3 at the time of the fire, to assist them in updating their records from the 2008 census (conducted after the 2007 fire). This lack of effort on the part of the government to work with the fire victims to establish an accurate list of beneficiaries, further questions the legitimacy of the raffle, not to mention the government's stated intention of fairness and transparency.

Following this meeting, MUPHAI decided to take action by writing a petition paper to make it known that there were other organisations representing the fire victims and claiming rights to the lot, and to outline their concerns about the raffle.

'After we submitted our position paper that had the signature of 500 households, that is when the city government became aware that there were other organisations among the fire victims. So we pushed to be included in the dialogue regarding the compromise agreement with the city government... Between February 4 and February 17, we had a series of meetings with MUPHAI and other organisations... excluding FEDMACOPI. We kept on trying to arrange a meeting with the mayor, to have dialogue with him about the situation. We kept on going to the secretary of the mayor, myself and the other representatives of the fire victims. We went to the City Hall, 400 of us, to try to schedule a meeting with him to have dialogue about the raffle, the whole month of February. The whole month of March we tried again, but he did not agree to talk to us. But during this time at CICC, we among ourselves had a series of meetings. The thing that we were most alarmed about which we wanted to discuss was the conditions [of who would be included in the raffle].'

After months of silence, on 5 April, 2016, Menchu and the 14 camp leaders at the CICC (the majority of whom were actually MUPHAI members) received an unexpected phone call informing them that government representatives were coming to meet them that day. When they arrived, the leaders were told that the raffle would take place the following day. Households that didn't attend would have a ticket pulled on their behalf, where, as explained to me by Menchu '[i]f you get a Mandaue City logo, then it means... [y]ou are not going back to the area, you are going to a relocation. But if you pull a lot number then... you will go back to the area.' Most problematically, though unsurprisingly, the 657 beneficiaries identified

by HUDO didn't match the master list compiled by the homeowner associations of structure owners living in their areas prior to the fire. According to MUPHAI officer and CICC camp leader Gina, 'The city government does not care. If you are not on the master list from HUDO, you will not be included. Like Saturnino [a MUPHAI member], he is not on the list, but that is an error from HUDO. He is supposed to be a beneficiary but they did not include him in the list so he will not be included in the raffle.' For Saturnino and other structure owners who similarly found that they were not to be included in the raffle, the implications of the government's inadequate record-keeping and continuous dismissal of residents' concerns reveal the violence embedded in such efforts to govern the urban poor.

Later that day, MUPHAI officers held a meeting and Menchu consulted a well-known urban poor lawyer for advice.

'I asked her what will happen if we do not agree with the raffle and attend, but have a protest instead. And she said that they really don't have the authority to remove us from the lot, because we have proper documentation to prove that the lot was donated to us... It was because of their anger that they were simply going raffle off our security of tenure, instead of properly addressing the issue, instead of having a consultation with the people. So out of emotion, all the MUPHAI members agreed to have a protest instead and not go to the raffle. So at 10pm on April 5, the day before the raffle, we came here [to ground zero] and we assembled makeshift houses in our old lot. There was 126 *barong barong* that we made. And people from other organisations also decided to join us because they had no plans in their own organisation to protest and they wanted to join because they knew of our sentiments and our rights [after we informed them about why we were protesting and the advice from the attorney]... [W]e [also] had allies from... the militant groups, for example from Piston, the militant group for drivers.'

I asked Menchu what she meant by militant, a term I had often heard used by government officials speaking about unspecified urban poor groups in the city who protested and resisted state-driven danger zone evictions.

'They are an activist group, like a leftist group. Their nature is to rally and protest, unlike other groups that will talk to the government. They are a national movement but they have a chapter here in Cebu. So even though this is not an issue about drivers but it is an issue about land tenure, the leaders of Piston supported this because it is an issue that affects their members... So Piston made an announcement by megaphone to tell their members... not to go to the raffle at the complex... And in the morning at 7am, the city government became aware of our protest and became angry. I had invited the media to do an interview here at the area, to tell them about why we were [protesting]... There was a lot of media here. City TV, ABC TV, the radio, [lists more]... [W]e were angry... [because] the master list that they gave us on April 5 had people included who were not affected by the fire, and people who were affected by the fire were not included... That is what we told the media as to why we

were protesting. MUPHAI initiated this protest action but it is for the benefit of all 9.2 beneficiaries.<sup>69</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Menchu received a phone call from the mayor's chief of staff:

'[T]hey said "stop what you are doing. Do not convince people not to attend the raffle, don't try to stop this, you are supposed to convince people to go to the raffle, not the other way around." So through the phone, this chief of staff was asking me to go to City Hall to have a dialogue with them. But I said, no, you come here and then you consult the people, you tell the people and convince the people. Why just me? Then they got angry on me, and it was like I was the right person to kill [laughs].'

Only 110 people attended the raffle, and as it happened, the majority of those protesting had their names pulled to receive a lot in their absence:

'They pulled my name and called "Menchu Llesis, Menchu Llesis", but... a person from Department of Interior and Local Government told them, "no, she is not here, she is protesting." So then, the head of the demolition team from HUDO, came to ground zero. And at first I didn't know that I already won a lot and this person from the City Hall, a friend of the chief of staff came to me and told me that I won a lot and said he would take me to City Hall because the chief of staff is waiting at City Hall to talk to me. And I said "no, I am not going with you so go away and go home" ... He kept on trying to convince me. And the people around me made a barricade around me to protect me because the City Hall people were getting very angry and trying to get me to go with them.

And also the city legal, three attorneys came to ground zero to talk to me. We had a quarrel. They told me that if I don't believe them and come to the City Hall with them, and keep on convincing people to continue with this protest, then I will lose my job, because I am a job order with the city government. A job order means that you are not on employee terms, but just on contract. I am working as a community organiser across the 27 barangays. So I told them, "I already expected this, so go ahead and fire me." And so they fired me, on April 27, 2017 [laughs]... I think until now they are still angry at me. They have not moved on...

I was the one who got pointed out as the organiser of the two protests, including Piston protest as well, because I was the one who informed the Piston members about the raffle... that was why the city government is trying to file a case against me and sue me, as I was marked as the instigator. My name was marked as the troublemaker, the lawbreaker, the activist, the communist [laughs], they level all this at me.'

Menchu's bravery and tenacity to stand up to government officials, despite the very personal threats made to her, are testimony to the depths of her altruism, sacrifice and commitment to the collective good. It also suggests that the risks associated with forfeiting the communities' interests and voice were felt by her to be greater than the personal threats

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<sup>69</sup> 9.2 is the name of the city-owned lot donated to urban poor residents in the 1990s (see Appendix C, Figure C.1) all of which was razed in the fire. Its name references the land area of 9.2 hectares.

levelled by the government hoping to intimidate her (see also Brickell (2014) on the intimate costs borne by female participants in anti-eviction protests in Cambodia).

The protest lasted for 12 days, during which a series of meetings took place at ground zero with city officials and protesters. During the final days of the occupation, the city attorney leading these talks assured MUPHAI and the other protesters that although the winners of the raffle would be transferred from CICC to their newly assigned lots, a revalidation process would take place and any individuals found not to be a fire victim would be removed.

‘[T]he reason why MUPHAI organised the protest was for the city government to listen to what we were saying about the issue on the master list after we tried so many times to have dialogue and raise this with them but they ignored us. So for us, getting their attention on this issue was enough for us, so we ended the protest.’

I asked Menchu whose idea it was to occupy 9.2 by constructing *barong barong*:

‘I already got the idea from other groups who have done protests like this and won... I really thought this is the best way to get the city government to listen to us. Because at that meeting with the 14 leaders, they were really not listening, they were just announcing and telling us what was going to happen... And we had two plans written in our petition paper. Plan A was to talk to the city government about who should be included and not included in the master list and to make sure there was no duplication of beneficiaries, no ghost beneficiaries and that the actual fire victims were included should the raffle take place. And Plan B, if this didn’t work, out was to occupy the lot.’

MUPHAI’s strategizing and eventual decision to go with Plan B and occupy the site, speaks to the individual and collective agency that operates within ‘invited spaces’, and how state-mandated agendas that these platforms are intended to serve are subverted through various acts, big or small, of resistance; a ‘reinventing’ so-to-speak of the ‘invited’ to contest, in this case, the state, and broader power configurations (see Chapter 5) in the city.

In the days that followed, households that had secured a lot number in the raffle were swiftly transferred from CICC. What should have been a happy time in which households in limbo for over a year, could finally move back on site and start rebuilding their homes, was instead marked by trauma; a period that in Menchu’s words:

‘...was like winter... From the moment you are given your lot number in the raffle, then you are scheduled for the demolition.... We can voluntarily demolish but they [HUDO] were assigned to demolish and transport and they had a quota to finish in a day, so that is why they were doing it in a rush. So even though you are doing it and really trying to dismantle it yourself, they will “help you” and that just makes it worse. Juanillia and I were the last to be demolished because we kept on arguing with them to stall them so we could dismantle it ourselves. The only help that we got from them was for carrying the really heavy things, but we dismantled

everything ourselves. But others had their things totally destroyed and broken so they cannot reuse it.'

This was especially upsetting given that the only financial assistance given to victims was the 10,000 pesos [USD 200] worth of materials provided in the immediate aftermath of the fire. Most residents were thus reliant on the materials of their homes at the CICC, and worried about where the extra money needed to pay a carpenter to assemble their structures would come from. Owing to the 'rushed' demolition process that destroyed their materials, many ended up having to take out loans from extortionate private lenders to cover their basic resettlement costs, unnecessarily exacerbating their precarity.

'We had a person with us at ground zero and... he found out that his house was being demolished. So when he found out, HUDO had already demolished his house and brought it to block two. They just demolish and leave it there [at your new lot] and it is for you to decide what you are going to do about it. What kind of government does this? It is an anti-poor government... This was a very difficult and very traumatic experience this year until now. We are not yet recovering from our trauma. Our trauma and our social belongingness. *Guba* [wrecked]. They have destroyed our social belongingness...'

On this last point, Menchu relayed that instead of relocating neighbours and association members close together to mirror, where possible, original community geographies, those most vocal in the protest were intentionally separated from their neighbours:

'They tried to split us up after the protest to try to stop us from organising. Because originally I was supposed to be placed in the Mantuyong area but they transferred me near Guizo because they do not want me to keep leading the organisation... so they moved me far away... Only me and Juanillia. Everyone else is in the same area. They wanted that the old organisation would not be formed back and would not continue, but they are wrong because our location is just a nearby lot... so with one text we can have people in the area. Now we can network with our neighbours from... the other barangays that have the same advocacy regarding security of land tenure so we can revise our movement to join together.'

Despite these efforts to splinter the social connectedness on which homeowner associations like MUPHAI rely, Menchu's concluding remarks speak to her strength and tenacity to continue fighting for justice for urban poor communities. Since being fired from her job, she has started working as a volunteer community organiser for ex-mayor and current congressman, Jonas Cortes, with whom she has a good working relationship; a role that in addition to keeping her connected with urban poor communities around the city, covers her transportation costs and provides her with a small daily allowance. She is also sitting on the revalidation board led by HUDO, to ensure a fair process not only for MUPHAI members but for all the fire victims from 9.2, ensuring that those unable to secure a lot are offered a relocation within Mandaue City. Through the help of FORGE, MUPHAI has also

created an alliance with other homeowner associations in similar circumstances, to lobby the government for a resettlement budget and relocation site. '[T]hat will make our case bigger if we have other homeowner associations negotiating with us. We have now 14 homeowner associations in the All POWER Mandaue chapter [established after the protest]... Because if you don't make this alliance work then it will be difficult to pressure the government to listen to you.'

## **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined community-based risk management activities and the tactics of political engagement adopted by informal settlers to mitigate and contest the everyday and exceptional risks that threaten their communities. Positioning homeowner associations as critical players in community-based risk management, I have traced a link between localised encounters with risk and the impetus for communities to organise, identifying land tenure struggles and aspirations for secure housing as central to these movements. Bound by the legal stipulation that homeowner association members must be 'structure owners' and cannot be renting or living in extended family arrangements, these organisations also engender certain exclusions that reproduce rather than challenge the neoliberal ideals discussed in Chapter 5 which mark private property and homeownership as a desirable attributes of the world-class city and citizen. As such, while homeowner associations provide informal settlers with a critical political platform for claiming their rights, their participation in these state-mandated institutions also simultaneously aligns them with the structures and beliefs that are contributing to their dispossession, revealing the complicity of neoliberal ideals within the enactment and imagination of collective action. Although in some communities, distinctions between owners and renters may have little impact on social dynamics and relations, as demonstrated in the lot raffle for CICC fire victims and the many who were left out of this process, the 'invited' nature of homeowner associations also limits the reach of the benefits accrued through their collective efforts to negotiate a better deal for all. Respondent testimonies also showcase the messiness entangled in participation and journeys of empowerment, with the detailed account of MUPHAI's fight to have their voices heard, serving as evidence of the very real and embodied affective and material costs of engaging in ongoing political struggles for justice in the city. Respondents' stories of their successes and struggles complicate Cornwall's (2002) distinction between 'invented' and 'invited' spaces, showing how the realm of the invited is continuously contested and reinvented by actors from within.

In this chapter, I have also reflected on the dynamics of gendered participation in local risk management activities. Building on the findings of the previous two chapters that exposed the various ways in which perceptions of and encounters with risk are gendered, I have argued that these gendered riskscape are contributing to the feminised character of rank-and file participation within urban poor homeowner associations. Moving beyond stereotypes and assumptions about women having 'more free time' and which attribute men's absence to their breadwinning duties outside the community, my analysis offers a more nuanced understanding of the drivers and barriers informing gendered participation in risk management. In examining the socio-spatial manifestations of gender roles, power and agency operating within, and extending from these spaces of collective action, I have suggested that these institutions, celebrated as beacons of 'resilience-building' and 'empowerment' may be inadvertently reinforcing gender dynamics that instrumentalise notions of female selflessness, altruism and sacrifice in service of the collective good and neoliberal efficiency gains.

My analysis of the narratives of male and female respondents reveals the multiple forces that are simultaneously working to produce and reinforce a feminisation of responsibility and obligation in urban poor collective action initiatives. External pressures include the structural dimensions of inequality discussed in Chapter 4 that contribute to particular gendered riskscape and mobilities connected with livelihood opportunities and divisions of reproductive labour, as well as related processes of socialisation that cultivate gendered attributes and behaviours from an early age. While values and behaviours associated with self-discipline, altruism and working for the collective good are being harnessed and reinforced through the community organising process, women's sense of responsibility also comes from within, cultivated in some cases by their faith and sense of duty to others, but also by the benefits that they accrue from their initiative. Not discounting the sacrifices and burdens associated with their participation, women's personal narratives reveal homeowner associations to be significant arenas of personal empowerment and transformation; an entry point for them to acquire new skills and knowledge, to grow in confidence, and expand their mobility and social and political networks. These capacities are constituted predominantly through their interactions with FORGE, reinforcing the relationship identified by Eerdewijk et al. (2017) between supportive institutional structures and the realisation of individual agency and empowerment.

By focusing my analysis on respondents' experiences and interpretations of risk and risk management, this chapter has also uncovered the hidden labours and unintended consequences, both positive and negative, associated with community-based risk

management. These dimensions are often rendered invisible by traditional appraisals of DRRM that concentrate on hazards over the multiple and subjective ways in which risk is embodied across time and space. It emphasises the dangers of depicting community organising and related risk management activities as gender neutral, while simultaneously cautioning against essentialist, binary framings of participatory processes as either empowering or exploitative. These findings also reinforce earlier arguments about the benefits of incorporating the everyday into considerations of the exceptional, and of the need to move beyond siloed techno-scientific preoccupations with hazards and hazard mitigation towards a more embodied intersectional understanding of risk.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis has explored the gendered politics of (disaster) risk and community organising in informal settlements in Metro Cebu. In the interest of expanding understandings of risk beyond the prevailing technocratic and apolitical conceptualisations that dominate DRRM and CCA agendas I have sought to give visibility to the perspectives and experiences of the people who are most affected by, yet typically excluded from policy conversations. Using participatory methods inspired by feminist epistemologies to give respondents more control over the interview process and offer them different mediums for expressing themselves, my research has exposed the emotional and material embodiments of risk and insecurity among informal settlers living in areas classed as 'disaster prone', and revealed that for them, encounters with risk are an everyday rather than exceptional reality.

Facing chronic stresses associated with poverty, land tenure insecurity, environmental pollution and political neglect, concern for these everyday risks and material struggles far surpasses their worries about a possible future extreme weather event. Anxieties over uncertain futures, though prominent in their narratives, were about fears of eviction without the offer of relocation, and the challenges of making ends meet on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, for residents affected by flooding and/or landslides, their vulnerability to such hazards, though exacerbated by extreme weather, was not confined to the realm of the exceptional, but rather was a threat that prevailed under normal conditions, and thus rarely, if ever, attracted state assistance in the aftermath of such events. I have argued that these subjective, although not necessarily individual, perceptions and realities, are a reflection of gendered access to, and control over, resources, opportunities, gendered mobilities, and gendered divisions of labour.

In analysing risk from the perspectives of the urban poor, I have also illuminated a relationship between insecurity of housing and land tenure, and events classified as disasters by popular definition, with fires in particular triggering eviction attempts and land tenure disputes. These ties extend to broader disaster risk governance efforts, where labels of disaster risk vulnerability-cum-responsibility are subjectively ascribed to certain urban poor communities, and often used to legitimise demolitions of informal settlements as part of state-endorsed urban development projects. I have thus argued that endorsing and propagating a language of 'disaster' inadvertently frames risk as unforeseeable, unpreventable and exceptional, deflecting attention away from the 'everyday' risks that have a greater impact on people's day-to-day well-being. This language also obscures the ways in which the elite groups including state actors and private commercial businesses

and developers are directly implicated in the production of risk and vulnerability in urban poor communities.

Lastly I have considered the strategies and activities of urban poor informal settlers within this landscape of everyday risk and insecurity, with a focus on their participation in homeowner associations. I have drawn on gender and development (GAD) and feminist political ecology scholarship to advance a more nuanced way of thinking about gender in urban (disaster) risk studies beyond the confines of women's assumed vulnerability. My analysis of respondents' subjective perspectives and experiences of risk and patterns of gendered engagement in CB(D)RRM, has led me to conclude that gendered riskscape are informing the feminised patterns of rank-and-file participation observed in urban poor homeowner associations and their associated risk management activities. Extending from this point, I have also reflected on the impacts of local risk management efforts on existing class and gender relations. My findings have revealed that participation in CBDRRM and community organising more generally, is reinforcing gender inequalities and power differentials through a 'feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation' (Chant, 2008). Participation is also simultaneously facilitating positive personal transformations among proactive women, with evidence that this is in turn reconfiguring gender relations at the scale of the household and beyond. Collectively, these insights reinforce the importance of considering everyday labours of social reproduction attentive to intersectional embodiments of risk within efforts to engender DRRM and resilience-building. Below, I summarise the key findings and arguments presented in each empirical chapter, followed by an overview of the main contributions of this thesis and its implications for practice. I conclude with a brief discussion of the limitations of this study, and potential areas for future research.

## ***7.1 Summary of findings and arguments***

### ***7.1.1 The significance of 'the everyday' in efforts to address 'the exceptional'***

A central question that underpinned this thesis was: 'How do urban informal settlers living in disaster-prone areas perceive and experience risk (and disaster)?' In response to this question, my first major empirical discussion in Chapter 4 provided an overview of the multiple and overlapping dimensions of risk and insecurity described by respondents over the course of my fieldwork. These included land tenure and livelihood insecurity, health risks emanating from defective or absent WASH infrastructure and public service neglect, as well as issues of criminality, violence and socio-political marginalisation and corruption. Respondents also spoke of their exposure to floods, fires, and landslides, relating these

incidents to their poor housing quality and insecure land tenure. My analysis of these interconnected issues revealed an intimate relationship between everyday and exceptional risks, showing how intersecting precarities in the present interact with and exacerbate people's vulnerability and capacity to recover from future harms. I have shown how financial and livelihood insecurity preclude people's access to safe housing and land tenure security, relegating them to living in unsafe environments and dwelling structures. The location of the study sites and their limited infrastructure and public service provision leave residents more susceptible to flooding, fires and landslides, and expose them to numerous health issues. In peripheral urban informal settlements, the lack of roads and access to affordable public transportation also affects residents' mobility, with implications for their livelihoods and income-generating potential as well as their capacity to evacuate in times of emergency.

In my analysis of these interconnected issues, I paid particular attention to gendered articulations of risk, reflecting specifically on how gendered subjectivities interact with, and compound, people's perceptions of, and exposure to, existing and future threats. Unpacking the life stories of respondents revealed gendered disadvantages in assets, education and wider opportunities at various life stages, the culmination of which left them in their current circumstances. Reading into the subtle nuances in respondent narratives, I argued that although both women and men are affected by the same types of risk and insecurity, their perceptions and experiences of these issues differ because of gendered structures of constraint, with women's heightened financial insecurity and dependence on male partners exacerbating their overall sense of insecurity. Furthermore, with women typically more confined to the domestic realm in their reproductive and productive roles, they are also more exposed to hazards in their communities. It is women, more than others, who spend their days inhaling the toxic odours and managing pests from rotting garbage, them who are affected when the water runs out while they are doing the laundry or bathing their children, or when their children become sick because with dengue or diarrhoea due to the unsanitary conditions and stagnant water. In more remote settlements lacking access to affordable public transportation, women may also find themselves unable to leave the community, or needing to walk for miles to accompany their children to school, or to purchase food at more reasonable prices than local *sari-sari* stores. I proceeded to argue in Chapter 6 that these gendered differences in perceptions of, and encounters with, risk are key factors informing participation in homeowner associations and local risk management activities.

In Chapter 4, I also highlighted the general absence of the term 'disaster' in respondent narratives, except following my specific prompt in the preliminary focus group

discussions. Most significantly, I spoke of the changes I witnessed in the nature of respondent conversations about risk when introducing 'disaster' into the frame. Where only moments before, respondents had engaged in a critical discussion about the political and structural drivers of vulnerability, for the most part they attributed (or at least associated) disasters with deistic or natural forces. Perhaps reflecting this shift in perspective on risk aetiology, people also spoke of the need for individuals and communities to be vigilant in their planning and preparedness for the unexpected, a necessity fortified by their distrust of the government given limited historical support. Nonetheless, this represented a notably different stance from their calls, also only moments before, for greater state accountability. Reflecting on these diverging conceptualisations of risk and disaster alongside the significance of everyday risk in the realities of the urban poor, I have argued that disaster discourse in the Philippines (as elsewhere perhaps) tends to serve the interests of the political elite over those who are most vulnerable and affected by these events. The term disaster locates risk within the realm of the unforeseeable, unpreventable and exceptional. In so doing, this depoliticises the discussion by obscuring the structural inequalities and elite actors involved in risk production, simultaneously placing the onus on individuals and communities to prepare and adapt, and, in the process, to absolve or significantly minimise state responsibilities.

### ***7.1.2 Displacement through disaster risk governance and resilience building***

I expanded upon this argument in Chapter 5 through an examination of the broader political economy of disaster risk governance in Metro Cebu, in response to my second research question: 'How is (D)RRM discourse, policy and practice embedded in the wider political economy of urban development in Metro Cebu?' Unpacking the neo-patrimonial and masculinist politics which characterise urban governance in Metro Cebu, I showed the impact of electoral politics on the urban poor's ability to access to public services and infrastructural investments, reinforcing the state's complicity in the production of risk in informal settlements. Reflecting on the 'materiality of the political', I also exposed the material and spatial embodiments of risks that are produced and reinforced through sustained infrastructural and political neglect. Through a detailed appraisal of the Mega Cebu project, I argued that the interests of the business and political elite are being advanced under the guise of disaster risk reduction, whereby big infrastructure projects that often necessitate the displacement of the urban poor, are presented as the means of achieving a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future. My analysis of disaster risk governance efforts also uncovered a discourse premised around risk, vulnerability, and benevolence targeting informal settlements, which inadvertently marks the poor as the

cause not only of their own vulnerability, but of the city's susceptibility to (disaster) risks. While this packaging of DRRM presents the socio-spatial reorganisation of the city as something that will benefit all residents equally, in effect it often translates into justification for the poor's removal from prime or high-value urban sites. Connected with my previous point about the political utility of the term disaster, marrying DRRM to worlding aspirations also conveniently obscures the unequal material and spatial geographies of loss and gain entangled in these subjective visions of modernity, not to mention the complicity of these same elite actors in the production of risk in informal settlements.

### ***7.1.3 Gendered agency and participation in local risk management***

In Chapter 6, I examined the strategies of political engagement adopted by informal settlers to mitigate their exposure to everyday and exceptional risks, and to contest the broader political agendas that seek to displace them, responding to my final research question which asked: 'How do informal settlers living in danger zones engage in risk management activities and to what effect?' Focusing my analysis around local homeowner associations, which I identified as serving multiple risk management functions in informal settlements, I examined the causes and consequences associated with resident participation in these spaces of collective action. In tracing the genealogy of these associations, I discovered that localised encounters with risk, namely the threat of eviction, were what prompted communities to organise and register as a homeowner association. These efforts were, in the majority of cases, led by female officers and members, with male office-holding most common in the Board of Trustees - a less labour intensive role, but one with notable status and authority as the official decision-making body of the association. From the earliest days of my fieldwork, NGOs and local residents attributed these patterns of participation to gendered breadwinning responsibilities, asserting that men were unable to participate because they were working outside the community, while women were unemployed and/or only had home-based 'sideline' jobs which afforded them the time and flexibility to get involved. However, although these ideas were salient in respondents' narratives, their actual circumstances often contravened these assumptions, as many of the female and male officers I came to know were engaged in full- and part-time employment within and beyond their communities.

Notwithstanding the influence of gendered livelihoods and mobilities on participation in homeowner associations, I have argued that gender roles (including but not limited to the kinds of work people do and where they do it), social norms, and especially gendered perceptions of risk (as discussed in Chapter 4), are all significant in shaping the

feminised character of rank-and file participation within these organisations. Given that women tend to spend more time in and around their homes, their particular concern for matters affecting the domestic realm makes sense. That men similarly framed their worries around issues which affected their livelihoods reinforced this line of reasoning, and all the more so in the context of *bayanihan* which identified women as the main participants across the board, and revealed that men were more likely to engage in activities oriented around 'male' domains such as road and housing construction, or infrastructure maintenance. Traditional gendered hierarchies and distributions of labour were also reflected in the higher proportion of male volunteers in the less labour intensive Board of Trustees, while women constituted the majority of officers responsible for carrying out the bulk of time consuming associational activities. I observed similar trends in the makeup of DRRM and ERTs, with predominantly male search and rescue teams, and female first aid and camp management volunteers.

My research has highlighted that in failing to directly acknowledge and reflect on social reproduction and gendered contributions to risk management activities, homeowner associations are perpetuating a 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' (Chant, 2008), and reinforcing gender dynamics that instrumentalise notions of female selflessness, altruism and sacrifice in service of collective welfare. This has important policy implications given the extensive promotion of CBDRRM and bottom-up resilience building in the Philippines and globally, with very little consideration of who is carrying out this work, or of the personal costs they incur in so doing. This said, paying particular attention to the meanings women themselves ascribe to their participation in homeowner association activities reveals another equally if not more critical dimension to these spaces of collective action. Women recounted with pride and enthusiasm the world of opportunities that had opened up for them as they became more active in their association, developing their skills, knowledge and confidence to stand up for themselves and their communities as their social and political networks expanded. This shows that participation is not a zero sum game, but rather a messy process of pros and cons; of sacrifice, altruism, agency and empowerment, which operate in tandem and deliver real material benefits.

When read collectively, the findings presented in my three empirical chapters emphasise the dangers of depicting community organising and (disaster) risk management as objective, gender-neutral, apolitical initiatives, and similarly, of framing participatory processes as either empowering or exploitative. They also highlight the shortcomings of existing efforts to engender DRRM and urban resilience that fail to consider classed and gendered embodiments of risk and risk governance initiatives. I have argued that

integrating considerations of the everyday into evaluations of the exceptional may offer a practical means of addressing this ‘black-boxing’ of intersectional subjectivities and political interests in DRRM agendas and interventions. These subjectivities exist not only in state-community ideals and perspectives, but also within communities, and even among women (and men), who as my research indicates, are not homogenous groups with shared gendered (or other) interests, reinforcing the value of intersectional analyses in feminist political ecology. I have also argued that incorporating everyday realities into considerations of exceptional events contributes to a re-politicisation of risk and disaster by directing attention to the experiences of those who are most vulnerable to hazards and using these to frame interventions. It also reveals the multiple and intersecting social, political and structural drivers of endangerment and vulnerability as they materialise at the scale of the individual, the household, the community and beyond. Recognising the importance of social reproduction to everyday survival and collective action, the lens of the everyday also exposes the power hierarchies and everyday acts of agency and resistance that are concealed by labels of ‘community’, ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’, making visible alternative modes of problem solving and ways of conceptualising a sustainable and resilient future.

## ***7.2 Key contributions and implications for policy and practice***

A key contribution of this thesis is its original conceptual framework, which combines GAD, disaster studies and urban geography scholarship through a feminist political ecology analytical lens to broaden the way we think about urban (disaster) risk and gender in the context of DRRM, climate change adaptation (CCA) and resilience-building interventions. The empirical insights into informal settlers’ perspectives and experiences provided by my research highlight that tendencies to distinguish between everyday and exceptional risk in DRRM policy and practice, do not reflect the realities or priorities of urban poor communities most affected by these issues. I argue that these separations actually obscure people’s lived experiences, and instead reinforce techno-scientific and objectivist portrayals of risk that focus on hazard mitigation in extreme calamitous events, rather than trying to understand and address subjective embodiments of risk, vulnerability and resilience. They also limit the kinds of activities that are considered part of CBDRRM and resilience building, rendering reproductive labours invisible in these processes, which may reinforce gendered divisions of labour and patterns of responsabilisation.

This thesis also contributes nuanced insights into the socio-political, material and spatial dynamics that underpin conditions of vulnerability and capacities for resilience. It

shows how social dimensions of power that inform inter alia divisions of labour, access to resources, political agency, and spatial mobility are intimately connected with people's subjective embodiments of risk and participation in risk management, and how these politics are simultaneously subverted, reproduced and renegotiated in complex and (seemingly) contradictory ways. These findings are significant in advancing how we think about participation in urban development, CBDRM and resilience-building by drawing attention to the unintended costs and positive transformations that emerge from these processes. They also help to disrupt dominant conceptualisations of gender in DRRM scholarship and practice, which view gender as shorthand for women, and which rely on and reproduce essentialist stereotypes of women as vulnerable first and foremost. By focusing on the gendered and classed embodiments of risk and risk management as seen from the perspectives of the urban poor, I have also exposed a link between DRRM and the displacement of urban poor informal settlers from the city. The centrality of housing and land tenure to issues of (disaster) risk and urban resilience building suggest that these need to be core considerations in DRRM policy and practice. These findings also raise important questions about what urban climate justice and sustainable urban development look like, and how they should be achieved.

A final contribution of this thesis lies in its methodological approach. I took a risk in giving respondents a blank canvas in the autophotography, and encouraging them to decide for themselves what images and stories they wanted to share with me. However, in relinquishing control to respondents through this activity, I was provided with rich insights into their lives that would likely not have surfaced through a more directive approach to the interviews. The photographs provided respondents with an alternative means of communicating intimate details about their life histories, their passions, fears, hopes and challenges with me. They also helped me to understand the subtle ways in which (disaster) risks are subjectively embodied over time. Combining this method with participant observation, focus groups and more conventional semi-structured interviews also gave me a degree of flexibility in how I engaged with respondents and how they felt most comfortable engaging with me. My thesis thus speaks to the benefits of letting the field (and respondents) speak for themselves, and the value of adopting creative methods as a tool for instigating storytelling and self-expression, especially when faced with potential literacy and language barriers. This, alongside my suggestion to focus on the everyday over the exceptional, are practical ways in which scholars and practitioners interested in exploring subjective embodiments of risk and socio-natural dynamics more broadly, can integrate a more intersectional and grounded approach to their work.

### ***7.3 Limitations of this study and avenues of future research***

While my research has offered an appraisal of gendered and classed embodiments of (disaster) risks in informal settlements, it by no means presents a totalising account of the lives of the urban poor living in danger zones. As discussed in Chapter 3, my entry into these communities was facilitated by a local NGO, FORGE, which had a pre-existing relationship with residents through their homeowner associations, and, in some cases, had encouraged and supported residents to organise in the first instance. Even within a small settlement of a few hundred people that an outsider might classify as a ‘community’, several different organisations might be operating, each with different members. As discussed in Chapter 6, distinctions among community-based organisations may reflect different external partners or allegiances, and relatedly, different political agendas driven by reformist (e.g. FORGE) or abolitionist (e.g. KADAMAY) ideals. While I would like to have engaged more with informal settlers who were not members of ‘homeowner associations’ in order to better understand their reasons for not joining, and perhaps to uncover other dimensions of local risk management, any attempt to reach out to different individuals or associations operating within my case study settlements would probably have met with suspicion all around and compromised the relationships I had developed.

As such, it should be noted that my findings are limited to a small sample of residents involved in a particular type of lobbying and community organising, although, as Menchu’s story (see Chapter 6) indicates, the boundaries of political activism are not impervious. With respect to my analysis of the gendered politics of participation in Cebu’s informal settlements, it would be interesting to see whether the gendered dynamics and repertoires that I observed in the FORGE-affiliated homeowner associations translate to the abolitionist wings of grassroots collective action in organisations such as KADAMAY, and if so, whether female participants also identify with, and share, similar narratives of empowerment. Relatedly, an analysis of whether and how *bayanihan* is mobilised in ‘unorganised’ communities as well as other types of community associations, and of the patterns of gendered participation therein, would also prove insightful. As DRRM, CCA and resilience-building become more prominent in urban development agendas, research that prioritises peoples’ everyday experiences, and which helps uncover the socio-spatial manifestations of power and intersectional subjectivities within these processes will be invaluable in informing policy and practice to ensure that these endeavours address rather than reproduce the inequalities and exclusions that underpin vulnerability.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Focus group participant profile*

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#### FACILITATOR NOTES

\*\* Participant Profiles to be completed either individually in writing (with support offered as needed) or facilitator to record from introductions.

\*\* Note household structure and headship (e.g. nuclear, mother and children, male-headed extended, female-headed extended (de-facto/de-jure), semi-family, single sex, etc.)

\*\* Facilitator to note relationship of participant to other members of the group (e.g. unknown/no previous contact; acquaintance; friend; classmate; workmate; neighbour; relative)

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#### **Participant Profiles (to be completed in writing)**

Name: *Pangalan:*

Homeowner Association and role (e.g. member, officer, president etc)

Age: *Idad:*

M/F: *Lalaki/Babaye:*

Birthplace (sitio, barangay, village/town/city, country): *Lugar sa natawhan (sitio, barangay, lungsod/syudad, nasud)*

Place of residence (sitio, barangay, city): *Lugar nga gipuy-an (pangalan sa lugar/sitio, barangay, lungsod/syudad):*

How long have you been living at your current place of residence and where did you move from? *Unsa na ang gidugayon sa imong pag-istar sa lugar nga imong gipuy-an karon ug as aka nagpuyo sa una?*

Do you practice a religion, and if so, which? (e.g. Christianity, Islam, Non-religious) *Duna ka ba'y tinu-uhan, kung duna, asa ani? (panglitanan: Kristyano, Islam, Dili-Relihiyon)*

Do you have a disability or long term health condition that affects your ability to carry out normal day to day activities? (If yes, please describe your disability/condition) *Aduna ka ba'y kakuli-an o lanat nga kondisyon sa panglawas nga naka-apekto sa imo'ng abilidad sa paghimo sa inadlaw-adlaw nga gimbuhaton?*

What is your occupation? *Unsa imong panginabuhian?*

What is your side-line work? *Unsa ang imong sideline na trabaho?*

How many years of school have you completed? *Pila ka tuig ang imong nahuman sa pag-iskwela?*

Civil status: e.g. single, married, live-in partner, LGBT live-in partner, separated, widowed  
*Kahimtang sibil: pananglitan: ulitawo, dalaga, minyo, tipon, LGBT paris, bulag, biyudo/da*

Fertility status: No children; Number of children (if relevant) *Kahimtang sa pagpanganak: Wala'y anak; pila ang anak (Kung aduna)*

Do you own your own house, do you rent it, or are you living in a house lent to you by someone? If your house is owned, in whose name is it registered? *Ikaw ba ang tag-iya sa imong balay gipuy-an, imo ba kini gi-abangan, or nagpuyo ka ba sa balay nga gi-prenda kanimo? Kung gipanag-iya ang imong balay, kang kinsa nga pangalan naka-rehistro?*

Who do you live with at the moment? If living with friends or family, please give brief details of their relationship to you (e.g mother, father, grandparents, grandchildren, sister, brother, friend etc), their age and what they do (e.g. type of work or study). *Kinsa ang imong kuyog sa pagpuyo karon? Kung nagpuyo sa mga higala o pamilya, palihug sa paghatag sa mubo nga detalye sa ilang relasyon kanimo (pananglitan: inahan, amahan, lola, lolo, mga apo, igsuon nga babaye, igsuon nga lalaki, kauban sa trabaho), ilang edad ug unsa ang ilang ginabuhay/trabaho (pananglitan: tipo sa trabaho o gi-iskwelahan)*

<u>Relationship to participant (you)</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
<i>Relasyon niini sa partisipante (ikaw)</i>	<i>Idad</i>	<i>(babaye/lalaki)</i>	<i>Panginabuhi</i>

Do any of these individuals have a disability or long term health condition that affects their ability to carry out normal day to day activities? (If yes, please state who and the type of disability if known) *Sa nahisgutan nga mga indibidwal aduna ba'y naapil nga may kakulian o lanat nga kondisyon sa panglawas nga naka-apektar sa iyang inadlaw-adlaw nga paglihok? (kung duna, palihug sa pagsaysay kinsa ug iapil ang tipo sa kakulian kung nakahibawo ka.)*

On a scale from one to ten how sufficient are your household resources in meeting your households' daily needs? (One being completely insufficient, ten being fully sufficient in covering food health and shelter needs). Why? *Paigo ba ang inyo'ng kita sa pagtubag sa inadlaw nga panginahanglan sa inyo'ng balay? Sa scale gikan sa one to ten, asa dapit? (one (1) -grabe ka kulang, ten (10)- sakto ra nga ipalit sa pagkaon, panglawas ug kapuy-an). Ngano man?*

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Is there any other information about your household or personal circumstances that you would like to share with us? *Aduna ba'y lain pa nga impormasyon kabahin sa inyo'ng panimalay or personal nga butang nga gusto nimo ipa-ambit kanamo?*

Is there any other information about your household or personal circumstances that you would like to share with us? *Aduna ba'y lain pa nga impormasyon kabahin sa inyo'ng panimalay or personal nga butang nga gusto nimo ipa-ambit kanamo?*

## ***Appendix B: Focus group discussion semi-structured questions***

**\*\* FACILITATOR(S) TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES**

**\*\* JR INTRODUCTION:**

I am a PhD student from Canada studying at the London School of Economics in the UK. The aim of my study is to explore perceptions and experiences of risk, poverty and gender in Metro Cebu. In addition to speaking with you and other homeowners associations, I will also be speaking other with civil society organisations, private enterprises, and government officials to get their perspective. I will share my findings with FORGE and all other involved parties with the intention that they help inform the improvement of programmes and interventions to beneficiaries.

*Ako si Jordana Ramalho, istudyante sa PhD gikan sa Canada nga nagtungha/nag-iskwela sa London School of Economics didto sa United Kingdom. Ang tumong sa akong pagtuki mao ang paghibalo sa mga pagtan-aw ug kasinatian bahin sa risiko ug kawad-on sa mga babaye ug lalaki sa Metro Cebu. Lakip ang pakig-istorya kaninyo ug sa uban pa nga mga homeowners associations, makig-istorya usab ako sa lain pa'ng civil society organizations, private enterprises, ug opisyaes sa gobyerno aron kuhaon ang ilang panglantaw.*

While I will be raising some questions in the course of the discussion, I am happy for you to take the discussion in ways that you feel are meaningful concerning your own lives. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to my questions. The main aim is simply to elicit your opinions.

*Aduna koy mga pangutana nga atong pagahisgotan sa atong panagtapok, apan abli ug malipayon ra pod ko nga mag-istorya ta og mga hisgutanan nga makahuluganon para kaninyo. Wala'y sayop o sakto sa mga tubag sa akong pangutana. Ang nanguna nga tumong mao ang simple nga pagkuha sa inyu'ng mga opinyon.*

I would like to remind you that your participation is absolutely voluntary so if you feel uncomfortable at any point please feel free not to answer the question or to leave the discussion. All the information given will be treated in a confidential manner and there is no obligation from myself or FORGE to answer any question you feel you would rather not respond to. Feel free to ask questions at any point.

*Ang tanan nga impormasyon nga gihatag ninyo itratar nga kumpedensyal, sa ato pa, tanang impormasyon imong ihatag kay pribado ug walay lain nga makahibaw nga ikaw ang nagsulti niini, dili usab mogawas ang inyong pangalan sa bisan unsang dokumento nga mahimo subay sa atong diskusyon. Wala'y obligasyon nga tubagon ang tanan'g mga pangutana kung sa imo'ng tan-aw dili ka angay motubag sa pangutana. Ayaw pagduha-duha sa pagpangutana sa bisan unsa nga punto.*

To ensure I am able to capture everything you say and save me taking notes, I would appreciate it if I could tape the discussion, and hope this is OK with you.

*Aron maka-minus sa akong pagsige og sulat, mananghid ko ninyo nga mogamit ko og tape recorder, hinaot ok lang kini ninyo.*

**\*\* DESCRIBE LAYOUT OF SESSION (3 SECTIONS WITH 10-15 QUESTIONS IN EACH) AND GIVE ESTIMATED TIME OF DISCUSSION OF 2-2.5 HOURS**

**\*\* ASK IF THEY HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO SET ANY GROUND RULES FOR THE SESSION**

First, I would like for us to get to know one another, so would like to know your name, age, where you were born, the neighbourhood in which you live, the size of your household and who you live with (e.g. parents, siblings, other relatives). If possible, I would also like to know a little about the work you and different members of your households do (or, if relevant, where you are in your studies).

*Una, gusto ko nga mag-ila ila kita'ng tanan, gusto ko nga mahibalo sa inyo'ng pangalan, edad, asa mo natawo, ang lokalidad diin kamo nagpuyo, ang gidak-on sa inyon'g panimalay ug kinsa ang inyo'ng kuyog sa pagpuyo (pananglitan: ginikanan, mga igsuon, uban pang paryente). Kung possible, gusto usab ko mahibalo bisan gamay lang kabahin sa inyo'ng trabaho ingon man sa lain-lain nga sakop sa panimalay (o, kung relevant, unsa ug asa ka na nag-iskwela)*

**\*\* FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS**

**\*\* TO START THE DISCUSSIONS AFTER GROUP INTRODUCTIONS, ASK:**

Referring to the profile question, on a scale from one to ten how sufficient are your household resources in meeting your households' daily needs? (One being completely insufficient, ten being fully sufficient in covering food health and shelter needs). Why?

*Paigo ba ang inyo'ng kita sa pagtubag sa inadlaw nga panginahanglan sa inyo'ng balay? Sa scale gikan sa one to ten, asa dapit? (one (1) -grabe ka kulang, ten (10)- sakto ra nga ipalit sa pagkaon, panglawas ug kapuy-an). Ngano man?*

**THEMES FOR DISCUSSION**

## **Gender**

1. In your household, who are the household heads?  
*Sa inyo'ng panimalay, kinsa ang mga nangulo?*
2. How do you determine this?  
*Gi-unsang nimo kini pag-ila?*
3. Who in your household makes decisions about the following? How? (e.g. ask for recent examples of decision-making in each category) Why are decision-making responsibilities divided this way?  
*Kinsa sa inyo'ng panimalay ang nagahimo sa desisyon kabahin sa mga mosunod? Gi-unsang? (pananglitan: pangayo sa pinakabag-o nga ehemplo sa paghimo og desisyon sa lain-lain nga kategorya) Ngano man nga ang paghimo sa desisyon gibahin man niini nga paagi?*

Children's education:  
*Sa pagpa-iskwela sa mga anak*

Children's health:  
*Panglawas/kahimsog sa mga bata/anak:*

Spending money on the communal things for the house (e.g. TV, home improvements):

*Sa pag-gasto sa mga komun nga butang alang sa balay (pananglitan: TV, pagpaayo sa balay):*

Spending money on leisure (going out to eat, movies, music etc.):

*Sa pag-gasto sa lulinghayaw (manga-on sa gawas, tan-aw og sine, live music ug uban pa):*

When to have sex:

*Kung kanus-a makighilawas:*

Family planning:

*Paglano sa pamilya:*

4. How is labour divided/shared in your household? What kinds of responsibilities do men/women/young men/young women have? (e.g. what do men/women/boys/girls do; How you/they spend their time)  
*Giunsa pagbahin ang mga buluhaton sa inyo'ng pamilya? Unsa nga mga klase sa responsibilidad ang gikuportan sa kalalakin-an, kababayan-an, mga lalaki'ng batan-on, mga babaye nga batan-on? (pananglitan: unsa'y ginabuhat sa mga lalaki/babaye/; gi-unsang nila pag-gamit ang ilang oras)*
5. What are the differences between women and men in the Philippines? (e.g. physical, emotional, psychological, material, obligation-wise etc)?  
*Unsa'y mga kalahi-an sa babaye ug lalaki sa Pilipinas? (pananglitan: pisikal/pormada sa lawas, emosyon, panghuna-huna, material, obligasyon ug uban pa)?*
6. Are there any major differences in the status of men and women in the Philippines? (e.g. do men have more respect, power, privileges? What sorts of privileges? Why/why not?)  
*Aduna ba'y mga mayor nga kalahi-an sa status sa lalaki ug babaye sa Pilipinas? (Pananglitan: mas gi-respito ba ang kalalakihan, mas duna'y gahum, mas duna'y pribilehiyo? Ngano man/nganong dili man)?*
7. Do you have much time for rest or leisure? About how much 'time off' do you have in a typical week? When in the week do you have the most time off/to relax? (e.g. evenings/weekends)  
*Aduna kapa ba'y panahon sa pagpahulay o lulinghayaw? Mga pila kaha ka oras ang imo'ng magahin sa tipikal nga semana? Unsa nga adlaw sa semana nga mas daghan ka og oras nga mopahulay o mo relaks? (pananglitan: gabii/sabado o dominggo)*
8. How do you spend that time?  
*Gi-unsang nimo pag-gamit ang imo'ng oras?*

9. (Are women and men becoming more equal over time?) (Why/why not?) What changes have you observed over time in relations between men and women? E.g. in the past 10 years-15 years.  
*Sa paglabay sa panahon, makaingon ba ka nga mas nagkapatas na ang mga kababayan-an ug kalalakin-an? (ikumpara ang herasyon; ngano man/ngano'ng dili man?)*

## Discourses of risk

1. What is your favourite thing about where you live? Why? (e.g. location, proximity to livelihood or family, services, family history etc)  
*Unsa ang imong paborito o ganahan nga butang mahitungod sa imong gipuy-an karon? Ngano man? (pananglitan: lokasyon, guol sa trabahu-an o pamilya, serbisyo, kasaysayan sa pamilya ug uban pa)*
2. What are the worst aspects/things you like the least about where you live? Why?  
*Unsa nga mga maot nga aspeto/butang nga mas dili nimo gusto/ganahan mahitungod sa imong gipuy-an karon? Ngano man?*
3. What kinds of things make you feel anxious or stressed? (\*\* Ask them to rank them starting with the greatest cause of stress)  
*Unsa nga klase sa butang nga makapabalaka o makahasol kanimo? (kung duna'y kalambigitan, ilista kini nga pasunod gikan sa mas grabe'ng hinungdan sa makahasol kanimo)*
4. How often do you feel this way?  
*Unsa ka makanunayon ka makabati niini?*
5. Do other people in your family feel stressed about these things as much as you? Why/why not?  
*Aduna ba'y lain'g sakop sa pamilya nga nakabati usab og kahamol sa mao nga mga butang sama kanimo? Ngano man/ngano wala man?*
6. How do you try to cope with or reduce these stresses? (What kinds of things help to make you feel better about these stresses?)  
*Gi-unsu nimo kini paglabang o pagpaminus ang mga nakahasol?*
7. What kinds of risks/dangers do you encounter in your home or community? (e.g. What kinds of things affect your personal safety and/or well-being?)  
*Unsa nga klase sa risgo/kakuyaw/hulga nga imo'ng nasugatan o nasugamakan sa imo'ng balay o komunidad? (pananglitan: unsa nga mga klase sa butang nga makapapekto sa imong personal nga panglawas ug/o kalipay?)*

8. What would you say are the main things causing these risks/dangers?  
*Unsa imong maingon/masulti nga nanguna'ng hinungdan niini nga mga risgo ug kakuyaw?*
9. Can you tell me about a time you felt vulnerable/at risk? What did you do?  
*Maka-sulti kaba kung unsa nga panahon makabati o makabatyag ka nga bulnerable/o naa sa risgo? Unsa ang imo'ng buhaton?*
10. In what ways do these risks/dangers affect you, your family and/or your community?  
*Sa unsa nga paagi nga kini'ng mga risgo/kakuyaw naka-apekto kanimo ug/o sa imo'ng pamilya?)*
11. Are there any people in the city/community who are most at risk? If so, why is this?  
*Aduna ba'y mga tawo sa syudad/komunidad nga anaa sa taas nga risgo? Kung duna, ngano man kaha kini?*
12. Do any of you ever see yourselves as 'vulnerable' or 'living in a high risk area'? Why/why not?  
*Aduna ba sa inyo nga nagtan-aw sa inyu'ng kaugalingon nga bulnerable o nagpuyo sa lugar nga mas taas ang risgo? Ngano man/ ngano dili man?*
13. What does the government say about these risks/dangers?  
*Unsa'y gikasulti sa gobyerno kabahin niini nga mga risgo/kakuyaw?*
14. How has the government (national, LGU, other department) tried to address these risks/dangers? Has it helped? Why or why not?  
*Unsa'y gibuhad sa gobyerno (nasyunal, LGU, uban'g departamento) sa pagsuway sulbad niini nga mga risgo/kakuyaw? Nakatabang ba kini? Ngano man o nganon'ng wala man?*
15. What other kinds of initiatives do you know of that are trying to address these risks/dangers? Who is running them? Have they helped? If yes how? If not why not?  
*\*\*Record government/CSO/community/household other and prompt for diversity\*\*\**  
*Unsa pa nga klase sa inisyatiba/lakang ang imong nahibaw-an nga makasulbad niini nga mga risgo/kakuyaw? Kinsa man ang nagdumala niini? Nakatabang ba kini? Kung wala nakatabang, ngano man? Aduna ba'y lain nga inisyatiba nga gibuhad sa uban nga organisasyon ug/o indibidwal nga ang tumong mao ang pagsulbad niini nga mga risgo/kakuyaw?*
16. What else do you think could be done to help prevent or reduce the impact of these risks/dangers?

*Alang kanimo unsa pa ang pwede buhaton aron makatabang sa paglikay o pagminus sa impact niini nga mga risiko/kakuyaw?*

17. Who should be responsible for this?  
*Kinsa kaha ang responsable niini?*

## **Discourses of disaster**

1. What does the term disaster mean to you?  
*Unsa ang imong pagsabot sa termino nga disaster/kalamidad/ Katalagman?*
2. What kinds of disasters happen in your community? (e.g. Type, frequency)  
*Unsa nga klase sa disasters/kalamidad ang nahitabo sa inyo'ng komunidad? (pananglitan: tipo, gikusgon)*
3. Have you ever experienced a disaster? If so, can you tell us about it? (e.g. details of event, circumstances, impact, feelings)  
*Nakasinati ka ba og disaster/kalamidad? Kung nakasuway, mahimo ba nga isaysay nimo kini? (pananglitan: detalye sa panghitabo, sirkumstansya, impact, gibatyag)*
4. What are the causes of these disasters?  
*Unsa'y mga hinungdan niini nga disasters/kalamidad?*
5. Are there any people in your community who are especially vulnerable to disasters? (e.g. types of households, the elderly, etc). If so, why?  
*Aduna ba'y tawo sa imo'ng komunidad nga mas labi pa nga vulnerable sa disasters/kalamidad? (pananglitan: panimalay/ihap). Kung mao, ngano man?*

### **Prompts**

*Do you think women and men experience risks/disasters differently? In what ways?*

*Sa imo'ng huna-huna ang kababayan-an ug kalalakin-an ba managlahi ang eksperyensya sa risiko/kalamidad? Sa unsa man mga pamaagi?*

6. What can/**do** people do to protect themselves from disasters? (please provide examples and facilitator to record if they/their household personally do this)  
*Unsa'y pwedeng buhaton sa mga tawo aron protektahan ang ilang kaugalingon gikan sa kalamidad? (palihug sa paghatag og mga examples/ehemplo ug aron ang facilitator mo-record kung sila o ang iyang panimalay personal nga naghimo/nagbuhat niini)*

### **Prompt**

*What do men do to protect the household from risks/disasters? (give examples of tasks in the household and/or community)*

*Unsa'y ginabuhat sa kalalakin-an aron protektahan ang pamilya gikan sa risiko/kalamidad?  
(paghatag og ehemple sa mga tahas sa pamilya ug/o komunidad)*

*What do women do to protect the household from risks/disasters? (give examples of tasks in the household and/or community)*

*Unsa'y ginabuhat sa kababayan-an aron protektahan ang pamilya gikan sa risiko/kalamidad? (paghatag og ehemplo sa mga tahas sa pamilya ug/o komunidad)*

*Do you think that children (under 18 years old) have a role to play in disaster risk reduction?  
If so what/how?*

*Sa imong huna-huna ang mga bata (18 anyos paubos) aduna ba'y papel sa pagpaminus sa risiko sa kalamidad? Kung mao, unsa/gi-unsa?*

7. Would you say there are more disasters now than in the past? If so, why do you think this is?  
*Makasulti kaba nga mas daghan ang disasters/kalamidad karon kaysa nangagi/kaniadto? Kung mao, ngano'ng nakasulti ka man niini?*
8. What does the government say about these disasters?  
*Unsa'y gikasulti sa gobyerno kabahin niini nga mga katalagman sa inyo komunidad?*
9. How has the government (national, LGU) tried to address these disasters? Has it helped? Why or why not?  
*Unsa'y gibuhat sa gobyerno (nasyunal, LGU) aron pagtubag niini nga kalamidad? Nakatabang ba kini? Ngano man o ngano wala man?*
10. How does your community/neighbourhood try to address these disasters and support those most affected? (*bayanihan*)  
*Gi-unsa pagsulbad sa imo'ng komunidad/silingan ang mga isyu ug ang pagsuporta sa mas grabe'ng naapektuhan?*
11. What else do you think could be done to help prevent or reduce the impact of these disasters?  
*Alang kaniyo, unsa pa kaha pwede buhaton aron malikayan o ma-ibanan ang impact niini nga mga disasters/kalamidad?*
12. Who should be responsible for this?  
*Kinsa man ang responsable niini?*

## Feedback

1. Have you enjoyed this discussion? Why/why not?  
*Nalingaw ka ba sa diskusyon? Ngano man/ ngano wala man?*
2. Is there anything else you would like to share with us before we finish?  
*Aduna ka pa ba'y gusto nga ipa-ambit kanamo sa dili pa kita mohuman?*
3. When/with whom do you think group discussions/consultations like this would be useful?  
*Sa imong pagtan-aw, sa unsa kaha nga higayon mahimong gamit ang mga diskusyon sama niini? Ug kinsa pa kaha ang angay mosalmot sa ingon ani nga panaghisgot?*
4. Would you be willing to be contacted again to take part in other activities as part of this research?  
*Abli ka ba nga kontakon pag-usab aron moapil sa lain nga aktibidad isip kabahin niini nga pagtuki or research?*

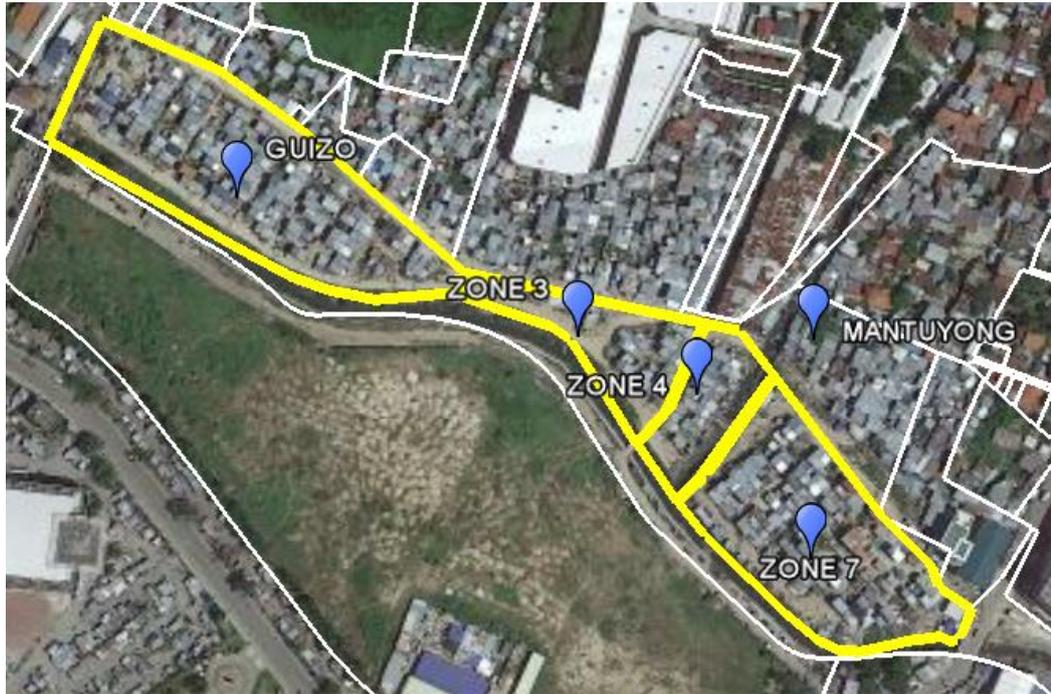
### ***Appendix C: The history of the 9.2 lot in Mandaue City***

Menchu had told me about this particular association known as the FEDMACOPI in a previous conversation about MUPHAI's land tenure situation on what is known as the 9.2 lot (in reference to its 9.2 hectare size, see Figure C.1 below), explaining that FEDMACOPI:

'had been politicised and was recognised by one of the previous administrations [Mayor Ouano]. Ouano had told FEDMACOPI that they would have jurisdiction over the lot. The lot was donated in March of 1998 to 600 beneficiary families from across four barangays (Subangdaku, Tipolo, Guizo and Mantuyong). This donation was given as a deed but it did not include any actual account of who the beneficiaries were. But in March 2007 there was the big fire, and then in April 2008, they conducted a census of to see how many actual beneficiaries were living in the area. In this census, they counted 1642 potential beneficiary families [up from the original 600 who had been living there at the time of the donation]. 878 of these families were able to prove that they qualified as beneficiaries with claims to land, as they could produce the necessary documents which included birth certificates, a certificate of no land holdings, a certificate of tax exemptions, a barangay certificate to show they were residents of the community, and a voter's registration certificate for Mandaue City. So those 878 households received a certificate to state that they qualified as beneficiaries.

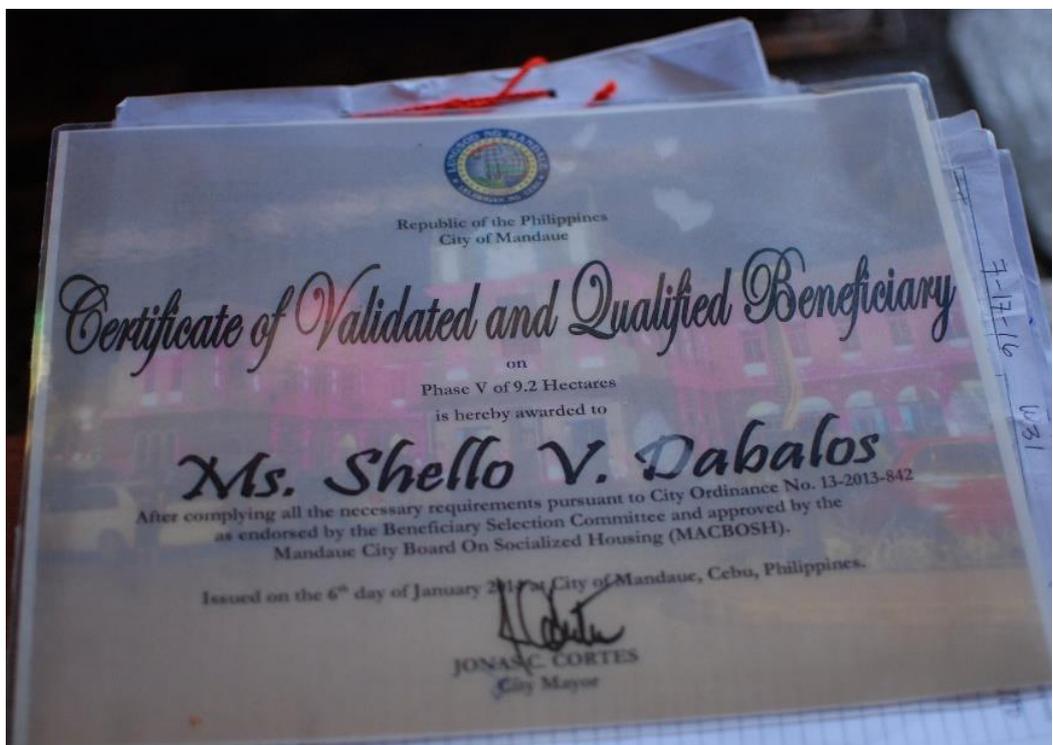
Of those not included in the 878, they are now in the process of submitting the necessary documents. But some of the 878 sold the rights to the land. In Zone 3, 4 and 7, about 20 families sold their rights, but they are saying that they sold their rights to their house and not to the land, so now they want to claim their rights to resettlement and assistance. But they had already moved to Cebu City or other places, and then after the fire, they came to claim relief goods... After the fire in 2007, they [FEDMACOPI] wanted to sell the land to the Gaizano group of companies. Beside the 9.2 hectares of land is a Gaizano lot. The lots are only separated by a road beside the [Tipolo] creek. FEDMACOPI is backed by the Ouano family. Actually there is no record of when the association was even started. The designation of the lot back in 1998 was signed and witnessed by [names a Senator and another individual]. They are both dead now. This is why MUPHAI was organised on 3 March 2010, so that there would be leaders who could stand up for the community. Mayor Cortes took office in 2007, and from 2011-2014, they did the validation of the 2008 census that identified who was a beneficiary as Cortes wanted to give the land to the settlers, not to the FEDMACOPI. Tipolo and Subangdaku were given a land owner certificate because they already had a subdivision plan. Until we [in Mantuyong] get one, we have a certificate (see Figure C.2 below).'

Figure C.1 Areal map of the 9.2 hectare lot (in yellow) donated by the government for urban poor social housing, and which was part of the area ravaged in the fire on 12 March, 2016.



Source: Google Earth images provided by HUDO, 2016.

Figure C.2 A beneficiary certificate issued to Mantuyong residents confirming them as beneficiaries of the 9.2 hectare donated lot



Source: Author's photograph, 2016.