Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines

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Introduction

Violence, and the explicit call for violence as a means to achieve political ends, were key features of Rodrigo Duterte's campaign for the presidency in 2016. When he won the office with sixteen million votes or a 39 percent plurality, it was considered as a democratic mandate to wage his so-called war on drugs. Win the war on drugs and the cures to other ills of the country will simply fall in place—that was his promise. Duterte asked for three to six months to make his vision a reality. There will be blood, he said.

This special issue of *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* comes off the press with Duterte midway through his six-year term as president. There was hardly any let up to the bloodbath that he called for. The war on drugs became a war against Islamic radicals, became a war against communist partisans, became a war against conspiracies and imagined enemies, became a war that is now ravaging the very institutions that are tasked to wage it.

The articles in this issue are some of the first outputs of the three-year research and advocacy collaboration between the Third World Studies Center (TWSC) of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman and the Department of Conflict and Development Studies (DCDS), Ghent

* Jeroen Adam, Joel Ariate Jr., and Elinor May Cruz, members of the steering committee of the research and advocacy project "Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines" also served as the editors for this issue of *Kasarinlan*.

University. The complex issue of violence serves as the focal point of this joint effort. The broader background is the practice of democracy at the grassroots, on how often the mandate and the complicity for violence against a suspect class is drawn at the expense of their supposedly inalienable human rights.

Where a climate of impunity, fear, and intimidation has been introduced, the growing literature on Duterte hints at a fetishism. Against this potential analytical blindspot, our project does not make the argument that the current wave of state-induced violence in the country is pure Dutertian invention. The political opportunities that this government has seized or crafted to govern through violence are deeply-rooted in Philippine history—a history that can be described as "the narrative of the interaction of narratives," whose cleavages play a decisive role in the production of violence (Stewart and Strathern 2002, 7). Thus, it is one of the aims of our research to render visible the contours and continuities in the deployment and experiences of violence across the country through case studies from the urban and rural brutalities of Duterte's drug war to the imposition of martial law in Mindanao.

Through unfiltered public pronouncements, Duterte unleashed missions of extermination targeting the defenseless and the very poor, creating a disposable class whose deaths are supposed to serve as an object lesson in fear and obedience to the armed agents of the state. Duterte's agents are supposed to be exercising the state's monopoly on violence. What he in fact created are killers, in and out of government, that understand power as coming from the barrels of their guns. Our research traces and puts on record a violent time in human rights and democracy in the country. It tells the narratives of violence founded on the struggles against and for these classes of Filipinos.

Crafting a Research Agenda and Forming a Research Network

The idea for this research and advocacy collaboration began four months after Duterte's victory. Rosanne Rutten of the University of Amsterdam referred Steven Schoofs, who was then a doctoral research fellow in Ghent University, to TWSC for a possible workshop to share critical reflections on Philippine politics and society, as well as preliminary explorations for collaborative research. What began as a series of online meetings between DCDS representatives Jeroen Adam

and Schoofs and TWSC research staff members Joel Ariate Jr. and Elinor May Cruz turned into the organization and conduct of a small workshop on February 3–4, 2017 in UP Diliman, "Politics, Power, and Social Transformation in the Philippines: Towards a Contemporary Research Agenda."

The workshop was more of scoping work to explore what the academe, media, and civil society organizations (CSOs) were doing and what can be done to pool them together, albeit with limited resources, toward making an impact on the present political climate. The workshop thus centered on three themes: change and continuities in politics and power in contemporary Philippines, crafting new theoretical and methodological approaches toward a new research agenda, and an engaged scholarship with enhanced impact.

Select participants from the academe, the media, and CSOs were invited to present on the subthemes of: 1) political power and organizing for politics, 2) resources for politics and bases of power, 3) transitions in political leadership, 4) political domains in everyday life, and 5) concentrations or dissipations of political power. Invited foreign and local scholars gave their respective takes on the epistemology of the field of Philippine Studies and politics (what could be the novel contributions of the above presentations to the field?), new methodological approaches (how to ensure that these novel contributions are carried out with theoretical and methodological rigor?), and ethics and positionality (for whom is the contemporary research agenda?).

The workshop threshed out the following preliminary key questions in contemporary Philippine politics and society toward crafting a research agenda in making sense of the present: 1) who are "we" when we begin to query why the old "lenses" and "tools" are no longer working, e.g., when human rights scholarship and practice fail to promote social transformation in the country?, 2) who are the new "subjects" of Philippine politics and how can we map the current political ecology?, and 3) what methodologies can be devised to capture the manifold contexts against the increasing normalization of real and symbolic violence in the country?

The collaboration between TWSC and DCDS paved the way for two intersecting projects as part of the South Initiative program funded by VLIR-UOS (Flemish Interuniversity Council–University Development Cooperation). The two projects were decidedly toward the conduct of research from different perspectives and localities not

limited to the academe nor Metro Manila, which will be made available and accessible to a public that has become highly polarized due to disinformation and propaganda. Our research must first and foremost be grounded and multidisciplinary.

The first project was "Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines: Strengthening the Quality and Impact of Academic Research" (2018–2019), which sought to create a research network that will be equipped to produce evidence-based research to reinforce public debates about the risks and consequences of authoritarian rule in the Philippines. The second was "Violence, Human Rights and Democracy in the Philippines: Publishing and Disseminating an Open Access Book" (2019–2020), which sought to collate the various research outputs of the first project into an open-access peer-reviewed book publication, accompanied by a dissemination strategy targeting diverse stakeholders. In both projects, former TWSC director Ricardo Jose served as local promoter and DCDS associate professor Jeroen Adam as Flemish promoter. University of Antwerp professor Gert van Hecken served as co-promoter and Belgian human rights organization 11.11.11 as one of our research network partners. A steering committee, with Jeroen Adam, Joel Ariate Jr., Elinor May Cruz, and Steven Schoofs as members, was formed to conduct and coordinate the research and advocacy project.

In the last two years, TWSC and DCDS organized several workshops that resulted in the creation, capacity-building, and maintenance of the research network, which was officially set up in 2018. The first workshop (January 11, 2018) served as a "casting call." Potential case study researchers were invited to present their research plans, discussants gave their input based on their grounded knowledge, and mentors abstracted the realities presented by the case study researchers into an articulate framework of study. Three key components make up the research network: 1) TWSC and DCDS representatives composed the steering committee; 2) established scholars, veteran journalists, and CSO representatives composed the advisory committee; and 3) academics, CSO members, journalists, and independent researchers were the case study researchers. At that time, the case studies were situated in the following localities, where the researchers were either based in or have extensive knowledge and experience of, or both: the Cordillera, North Caloocan, Bulacan, Iloilo City, Davao City (one case study on history and politics, another on the local media), Surigao del Sur, and Marawi.

By June 2018, the research network was duly formed. The second workshop (June 18, 2018) saw concrete research plans for the case studies, as well as candid discussions on their feasibility and how these case studies will cohere for the planned book publication. It was also around this time that the steering committee realized that aside from the case studies, the development of a database on drug-related deaths was needed. While we acknowledge that this initiative was not new—there were already several existing ones, such as the Drug Archive produced by a research consortium from the academe; Inquirer.net's "Kill List;" ABS-CBN's "Death Toll;" the government-backed "RealNumbersPH;" among others—and can easily be mired and weaponized in the politics of counting the dead under the Duterte administration, we envisioned the database to be primarily *a pedagogical tool* instead. What this means is the template for the database, as well as all other supporting documents, will be made available online for free via the project website, where counting the casualties of Duterte's war on drugs can serve as an exercise in reflexivity for the different state universities and colleges and CSOs across the country that have their own "numbers" to narrate.

We are pleased to note that the project website https://dahas.upd.edu.ph will be publicly accessible by February 5, 2020. We believe the database is pioneering in its historical and comparative attempt to cover the administrations of Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III and Duterte.

The third workshop (November 5–6, 2018), aside from discussing updates to the case studies, saw the presentation of the steering committee's preliminary attempts in the creation of this database.

By the second year, the fourth workshop (February 6–8, 2019) saw the additions of Abra and Cebu case studies, resulting in a total of eleven case studies, including the database. The workshop also marked the research network's transition from research to advocacy, as other members of the media and CSOs were invited, hoping to benefit from their experiences as the steering committee started to craft a dissemination strategy. Inviting members of the media and CSOs as potential advocacy partners during instead of after the conduct of the research has been completed was the network's way of forging a bottom-up partnership and generating buy-in in disseminating the outcome of the research.

Our experience, however, based on two workshops (February 6–8 and August 13–14, 2019) showed how the current political climate

has made it rather difficult for different sectors to come to terms and reflect on each other's works. It was evident that everyone was working on something, and for the moment, on their own. We remain optimistic however that as the two projects come to a close, efforts parallel to what the research network is trying to accomplish can, at some point, meet and converge toward fostering public debates that will countervail the reigning impunity in the country. The fifth and sixth workshops (May 17 and August 13–14, 2019) were meant to wrap up the majority of the case studies, with the exception of Abra and Cebu and the replacement of the Cordillera with Payatas in Quezon City as a case study site.

Our research rationale aimed at the production of empirically informed analyses of the state of violence under the Duterte administration, in particular, and the Philippines, in general. This rationale was motivated by research principles that give careful emphasis on grounded knowledge, different local realities, multidisciplinarity, historical complexity, and inclusiveness in knowledge production and dissemination. Finally, research parameters were drawn from the key concepts of violence, the state, and democracy, serving as orientation points for the case studies.

Stories from Select Localities and on Counting the Dead

This special issue of *Kasarinlan* contains the first cohort of the case studies for the project. These five articles describe the local realities of real and rhetorical violence deployed and experienced under the Duterte administration from: 1) the spate of killings in North Caloocan, the so-called ground zero of *tokhang*; 2) the continuing violent militarization within an indigenous community in Surigao del Sur; 3) the Islamist upsurge in Lanao del Sur that led to the destruction of Marawi City; 4) the patronage politics that weaves through the media landscape in Davao City and its import on the media reportage on Duterte's drug war; to 5) the development of a database on drug-related killings in the country. Among the five, excerpts of the three articles that focus on the localities of North Caloocan (Palatino 2020), Surigao del Sur (Gatmaytan 2019), and Lanao del Sur (Yabes 2019a; 2019b) have already been released online through different media outlets. This is the first time that the papers on the Davao City media and the development of the drug-related deaths database will be made public.

Raymond "Mong" Palatino wrote "Tokhang in Caloocan: Weaponizing Local Governance, Social Disarticulation, and Community Resistance" to probe the violent consequences of tokhang in the communities of North Caloocan. Known for high-profile killings, such as the deaths of grade-eleven student Kian Loyd delos Santos and South Korean businessman Jee Ick Joo, North Caloocan makes for a curious case with its local government unit's (LGU) full support and active promotion of tokhang. Mong details how the LGU's efforts turned it into a role model for other LGUs: from allocating bigger budget for its Anti-Drug Abuse Council to prohibiting city councilors from providing assistance to the victims' families or even visiting the wakes of the victims. Mong also described the social and political consequences of tokhang embodied in the concept of "social disarticulation"—an experience not dissimilar to what slum communities experience during government-organized forced evictions:

> The impact of tokhang could be similar to the demolition of communities but its methods are more brutal and sinister while shrouded in extralegal secrecy and affects a wider segment of the local population. It intensifies state intrusion into the lives of the poor, overkill police deployment is legitimized, and the community's state of underdevelopment is entirely blamed on the drug problem. It also undermines solidarity among neighbors by instigating citizen surveillance which makes it more difficult to promote unity in challenging the reign of oppressive local authorities. Community solidarity is shattered by tokhang where everybody is seen as a suspect or snitch in a supposedly drug-affected barangay.

Moreover, Mong did not leave out the responses of the communities in North Caloocan to tokhang. He also wrote how what seemed to be the final straw for the communities was the Phase 8 massacre in Bagong Silang, which involved the deaths of minors. Through the help of people's organizations, protests and collective actions were organized in the area. Funeral marches transformed into protests, and key intersections became protest centers. In spite of what happened in North Caloocan, Mong ends with hope. Based on the experiences of the communities that he documented in North Caloocan, Mong writes that "there is another way to deal with tokhang other than to stay silent or survive its brutality. That it is possible to fight back."

Augusto "Gus" Gatmaytan wrote "The Manobo Community of Han-ayan: Enduring Continuities and Changes in Militarization" as an attempt to describe a "phenomenology of militarization" based on the

experiences of the Han-ayan community during martial law in Mindanao. Han-ayan houses a Manobo community caught in a gridlock with mining interests in the area and the presence of the New People's Army (NPA). Gus's piece is a "partial history" of the place based on a set of violent incidents that held great significance for the community residing in it. Dating as far back as 2005, the Manobos recounted being assembled by the Philippine military to witness the torture and detention of several of their members accused of supporting the NPA and the brutal killings of their leaders by paramilitary groups, which perpetuated a cycle of displacement in the lives of the Manobos. Gus described how they trusted change was coming when a Mindanaoan came into power, only to be subjected to escalating violence yet again. On his administration's counterinsurgency efforts, Duterte threatened to bomb the Manobo community's tribal schools and the community's first experience of a drone overflight saw yet another evacuation:

> One Manobo woman declared that "the symbol of martial law here is [the military's] deployment of drones" (*ang hulagway sa martial law diri kining pagpalupad nila og drone*). This statement captures what, for the Manobo, is the most salient characteristic of life under Duterte's martial law: it is not just the continuing, virtually constant threat or reality of militarization, which, after all, is not peculiar to the Duterte administration. Rather, it is the community's perception that they—Manobo residents of civilian communities—are actively being targeted by the state's counterinsurgency forces and programs. Because each appearance of the [drone] is, from bitter experience, linked to subsequent military ground operations, the drone is not merely an eye employed in surveillance, but is also a virtual gun sight used to aim the violence of militarization at Manobo villages.

Gus also described how the continuous but markedly insidious form of violence under Duterte manifested in the social, political, and economic isolation of the Manobo community: they were being cut off from government services, there were food blockades where there were checkpoints, and they were being cut off from their network of support. Given the mining industry's influential role in the area—where "opposition to mining can and has been seen as opposition to the state itself"—and the intricate yet not inseparable history of the community with the NPA—where "[t]he Manobo, like other indigenous groups in Mindanao, have a tradition of political autonomy and self-governance . . . which long predates the coming of the NPA"—Gus hopes his piece based on the tales of the Manobo, narrated by the Manobo themselves,

can help in initiating with the state what is arguably a long and complex dialogue.

Criselda "Cris" Yabes wrote "Factors and Forces that Led to the Marawi Debacle." In this paper, Cris reconstructs the conflation of events, leading up to a five-month siege of the city of Marawi that started in May 2017 by an ISIS-inspired rebel outfit, under the leadership of Omarkhayam and Abdullah Maute. Despite monitoring by military intelligence and some targeted campaigns against this so-called Maute group in and around the town of Butig, young men were ideologically formed, mobilized, and trained under the charismatic leadership of these brothers and other leaders such as long-time Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon. In the end, the invasion of Marawi proved to be a surprise and a remarkable challenge to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as the Maute group managed to stand their ground for five months against the AFP. Crucially, these events provoked the promulgation of martial law on the whole island of Mindanao, despite the intense fighting being confined to specific quarters within the town of Marawi. Mindanao has remained under martial law ever since. At the same time, Duterte's groundless and callous claim that Maranaos are rich enough to rebuild their own city, will, according to Cris: " . . . likely fail to address the Muslims' future in nation building, as previous administrations lacked foresight and cutting-edge policies."

Karol Ilagan, Agatha Fabricante, and Christine Fabro's "Mirroring Duterte" is a case study on media politics in Duterte's Davao City. The authors zoomed in on Davao City's longest running newspaper, the *Mindanao Daily Mirror,* for its coverage on Duterte's drug war before he became president, and situated their case study in the local history of the community press and its ties with Duterte. The authors examined 256 *Mirror* articles during three key periods: Duterte's first government post (1986), the beginnings of the Davao Death Squad (1998), and the Commission on Human Rights inquiry into the extrajudicial killings in Davao City (2009). The authors also validated their findings from the *Mirror* with interviews with Davao-based journalists and media experts. The authors showed that the *Mirror* has focused largely on national and local government's anti-drug pronouncements, programs, and activities; while the victims and their kin were given the least coverage, and if given any, were treated in the articles as propaganda by the opposition. The authors also pointed to the pervasive use of mostly single sources, which as a result, saw articles written following the

conventional manner of reporting, i.e., mere enumerations to the questions "who-what-when-where-why." Related to this finding is the emphasis on numbers rather than the stories behind the numbers when it came to the drug deaths, referred to by the authors as "a hallmark of the media coverage of the drug war in Davao City." The authors contextualized the *Mirror*'s coverage of the war on drugs based on the following insights gathered from the interviews: 1) there is "general acceptance" of Duterte's style of governance in the local media, with some even personally subscribing to it having seen Davao at its worst; 2) economic pressures have brought about conditions of patronage and corruption in the local media landscape in Davao; and 3) in contrast to Duterte's experience with the national media when he became president, his relations with the local media were that of "a very personal relation." Finally, the authors gave an important point for reflexivity among media personnel:

> The media experience with covering Duterte and his hardline stance on crime also allows for some introspection, to examine the contours and cracks in the profession . . . . the local media's failure to cast a critical eye on Duterte's drug war when it started was compounded by other institutions also failing to investigate and hold actors to account. It wasn't until the CHR investigation when national newspapers started to really look into the killings happening in Davao. For the most part, the national media too were looking at it as a purely local event, that it had no national implication or that it does not relate to human rights. While it is important to be critical of government actions, it is also important to be critical of how journalism in communities and in Metro Manila is being done even if the old longstanding issues of reporting remain, i.e., low pay, lack of support for quality reporting, and the appropriation of journalism by partisan ideological or political interests.

Dianna Limpin and Ruth Siringan wrote "Developing a Method for Recording Drug-Related Killings" in the backdrop of competing and confusing figures in the drug war's rising death toll. Where disparate efforts have been launched to monitor and record these deaths, with some verging on propaganda and thus further obscuring the path to justice for the victims and their kin, the article is a decisive attempt to render transparent the project's development of a systematic method to document the killings, as well as share preliminary findings spanning the last two years of the Benigno S. Aquino III administration to the first two and a half years of the Duterte administration. Inherent

to sharing in detail the methodology is the promotion of its use where the conduct of counting the dead is one step toward promoting accountability. This is the overall aim for the database, where in the politics of counting the dead, accuracy and veracity in numbers are subject to manipulation and deception. Key insights drawn from the development of the database provide answers to the following: What do we know about the victims? What do we know about the killings? How are the killings related to illegal drugs? When and where did these killings happen?

A Legacy of Violence

The five articles were written from the different positionalities that each of the case study researchers are "situated" in. They tell stories not confined within Metro Manila nor the jargon of the academic. Compare these accounts then with what the Duterte administration has been frantically putting together in its effort to control the narrative of the supposed Duterte Legacy, "an account of change and accomplishment, as told by the people, for the people" (Duterte Legacy 2019). The articles in this issue counter this state propaganda by highlighting that the supposed "change" comes with a more insidious form of violence committed in the name of order and development. A context often lost in what seems to be an unwavering broad popular support for the government's culling of those perceived to be undesirables, including legitimate opposition figures.

Best exemplified by the word and practice of tokhang, this violence has a definite indigenous strain, the one that puts primacy in a leader's capacity to decide who should die as the ultimate and legitimating expression of said leader's power, just like the *datu*s (chieftains) of old. And in the case of tokhang, there are further considerations on how the power to kill is wielded. Should it be done within the purview of the state or outside of it? Through a police operation or a rub out? Should it be done by a posse of Davao cops or by masked assassins riding-in-tandem? Tokhang then points to what one can reasonably assume to be numerous cases of potentially unlawful deaths that should have been the subject of inquiries.

How violence has been deployed and experienced in the five case studies, both real and symbolic, point to its "layered quality" (Stewart and Strathern 2002, 1), and we hope this special issue helps in peeling off the initial layers. A perceptive reader will notice that up to this point we have not given, nor arrived at, a definition of violence. At this point,

we do not feel compelled to do so. We hope these pieces and the other case studies can enable us to do so at some point; in the end, we hope to map out how violence is inflicted, lived, accepted, and challenged under the Duterte administration. This, we hope, will serve as the initial bearings on the study of violence in the Philippines. Coincidentally, during the launch of the Duterte Legacy campaign, Martin Andanar, presidential communications operations office secretary, gave this speech:

> Amidst all these, the President emphasized the deeper, more serious crises before us—the evil that he has seen face to face, the evil that surrounds us, and the evil that is within us. He pledged to change all that, at the expense of his life, in the war he declared against illegal drugs, corruption, and criminality. On [sic] the third year of his administration, his battle-cry continues to confront these evils with great intensity, and no other leader has yet approximated his conquests. This is his legacy unfolding. (quoted in Gita-Carlos 2020)

For the research network, this can only mean there is no end yet in sight to the violence. Daniel Ross (2004, 7), in his book *Violent Democracy*, wrote about the inherently disruptive nature of politics and democracy to be "a constant possibility . . . [and] a kind of promise." However, we argue that those who will insist on reclaiming the democratic space must first reckon with the unclaimed corpses half-embalmed, half-rotting in some godforsaken funeral home. As part of our research and advocacy, we hope that our project, besides articulating realities on the ground, can direct our attention to possibilities of justice and restitution. While eight consecutive Social Weather Station (SWS) surveys from 2016 to 2019 show the "strong rejection" of the "*nanlaban*" ([violently] fought back) police narrative, the latest SWS survey also shows that Filipinos remain ambivalent about the drug war in view of its perceived impact on illegal drug use in the country (Mangahas 2020).

Duterte's drug war, as argued in a 2017 petition filed with the Supreme Court by human rights lawyers groups, is unconstitutional. It is also founded on the police parlance of "neutralization," that is, "to kill" (Buan 2019; PNP 2016). We can say that each fallen body is an indelible mark of where democracy in this country has contracted. We hope our research enables us to rethink the political culture in the country addicted to instant fixes (e.g., three to six months), as well as the convenient moral dichotomy of good versus evil (e.g., "Dilawan" versus Duterte Diehard Supporters, or DDS). That we learn from this government, from this tragic episode in the life of the nation, that killing people is never a solution to the perceived

ills of the body politic. That we can still change minds, now drawn by example by the current government, that the best way to handle the opposition is to shame and dehumanize them, then bludgeon them with the law to the point of submission. Democracy by excision will inevitably lead to self-mutilation. The clamor of the many to get rid of the few eventually becomes a series of purges until, finally, the murderous elite that hides in populist sentiment is exposed. This elite is often represented by the wilting figure of a demagogue. For it is always the moral quandary of any state that defines its being as an opposition to its conjured enemy that once the enemy is gone, it must keep on making one or else its reason for wielding violence in behalf of the people simply collapses. The whole country becomes a site of harm. This we must undo.❁

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Tokhang in North Caloocan: Weaponizing Local Governance, Social Disarticulation, and Community Resistance

RAYMOND PALATINO

ABSTRACT. The article maps out the violent consequences of *tokhang*, the flagship anti-drug operations of the Duterte administration, in the three largest barangays in North Caloocan by exploring the difference between the anti-drug campaign before and after 2016, the uniqueness of tokhang and the dynamics between the national tokhang narrative, the participation of local government units (LGUs), and the spontaneous and organized response of citizens and people's organizations. Data were gathered mainly from official government sources such as police files and budget deliberations, field interviews, and information sourced from Caloocan-based people's organizations such as recorded testimonies from relatives of victims and residents who witnessed tokhang operations and documentations of protests mounted in opposition to tokhang. The paper argues that tokhang weaponized the LGU mandate by linking the anti-drug campaign with the mandate of drafting an anti-criminality action plan and the enforcement of peace and order programs. The ferocity of these operations resulted in a kind of "social disarticulation" among the residents of the communities, and as a response, residents have launched various protests and rights campaigns against these anti-drug operations.

KEYWORDS. tokhang · drug war · North Caloocan · local government units · Social Disarticulation · community resistance

Introduction

Tokhang is the combination of the Cebuano words *tuktok* (to knock on something) and *hangyo* (to request or appeal), thus tokhang is "([for] a law enforcer) to knock on a suspected drug trafficker or drug addict's home to persuade them to surrender and stop their illegal activities."[1]

1. Wiktionary, s.v. "tokhang," last modified October 8, 2019, 13:23, https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tokhang.

As a government initiative, Project Tokhang, or simply tokhang, is one of the two operations carried out to execute the Philippine National Police (PNP) Anti-Illegal Drugs Campaign Plan—Project Double Barrel—which involves the "the conduct of house to house visitations to persuade suspected illegal drug personalities to stop their illegal drug activities." This definition can be found in the Philippine National Police Command Memorandum Circular No. 16-2016, PNP Anti-Illegal Drugs Campaign Plan - Project: "Double Barrel," July 1, 2016.

This article seeks to map out the violent consequences of tokhang in North Caloocan, specifically in the Tala, Camarin, and Bagong Silang communities. These represent the biggest barangays in Caloocan in terms of land area and population. Located in a resettlement zone for Manila's informal settlers, these *barangays* (villages) collectively remain a mostly poor urban district. Caloocan's main drug hot spot is in Phase 12 in Tala. Citizen protests against tokhang are also well-documented in these barangays. This study explores the difference between the antidrug campaign before and after 2016, the uniqueness of tokhang, and the dynamics among the national tokhang narrative, the participation of local government units (LGUs), and the spontaneous and organized response of citizen's and people's organizations.

Most studies and media reports focus on the high number of drug-related killings in 2016 and 2017 to highlight the aggressive implementation of tokhang and the violence it unleashed across the country. Investigative studies also document the president's rabid articulation of his antidrug drive and how he mobilized the police to instill fear. This article looks into the interplay of national and local agencies in conducting tokhang operations at the community level. It will present several tokhang-related case studies as examples of the brutal effect of the so-called "war on drugs" on ordinary citizens. Through this enumeration of cases, the paper aims to demonstrate that the violence of tokhang is not determined solely by counting dead bodies but also by understanding how residents interpret, survive, and experience it. Thus, the paper delves into the sudden imposition of tokhang as a top-priority law-and-order measure and how its entanglement with the local socioeconomic and political conditions led to violent results. In particular, it probes the critical role of the city and barangay LGUs in enabling the localization of the president's antidrug campaign, and seeks to unravel how violence is generated through the use of government laws and regulations, official and

unofficial interaction between state forces and the civilian population, and the president's fanatic sponsorship and defense of tokhang.

The paper also features the varied ways of how residents responded to tokhang. It documents how tokhang disrupted community ties involving the local population and state authorities, and it highlights the multiple acts of resistance of the community, especially the organized defiance against impunity killings.

THE RISE OF A FRONTIER CITY

There was a remote barrio in Manila during the early Spanish era called Aromahan located near the border of Tondo and Tambobong (now Malabon). From this *sulok* (corner), fisherfolk climbed the small hills to open homesteads which came to be known as Caloocan.

During the British occupation of Manila in 1762, Intramuros prisoners were set free and many of them sought refuge in Caloocan where they left a trail of violence and gave the place a notorious reputation.

But this peripheral zone also engendered resistance. Caloocan's first settlers were farmers from Hacienda de Maysilo who rose up against oppression. Andres Bonifacio's Katipunan signaled the start of the 1896 Revolution in Balintawak, which was then part of Caloocan territory.

Caloocan was geographically divided into two areas after its Novaliches and La Loma districts were made part of the envisioned new national capital called Quezon City in 1939.

The south part of Caloocan was the site of the country's first industrial zone, Grace Park, and remained a manufacturing center after World War II. A commercial area developed around the Bonifacio monument.

The north part of Caloocan marked the boundary between Metro Manila and Bulacan. In 1940, San Lazaro Hospital established a leprosarium in the Tala area covering 808 hectares. Family members of health workers and outpatients of the hospital helped in developing the Tala community by cultivating fields, planting vegetables, and building houses.

In April 1971, President Ferdinand Marcos issued Presidential Decree 843 creating the 575.5-hectare Bagong Silang Resettlement Project, which included a big portion of the Tala Estate. It was

designated as a relocation area for Manila's informal settlers which explains why some parts of the community are named after the areas where the settlers used to live (e.g., Zoto, Dagat-dagatan, La Loma, Little Baguio, and Munting Nayon).

But after some years, many housing lots remained vacant, since the intended relocatees could not find livelihood and employment opportunities in a community that is several hours away from Metro Manila's main commercial and business centers. Furthermore, poor infrastructure and the absence of basic services discouraged the arrival of settlers and them accessing the government's socialized housing projects in Bagong Silang and nearby Camarin.

During the early 1990s, urban poor groups organized the occupation of empty lots in Bagong Silang and constructed their own houses. They cleared muddy lands, cleaned the settlement, and established various community associations.

North Caloocan soon acquired disrepute for being a haven of persons with Hansen's disease, squatter colonies, and criminal gangs, and as a dumping ground of dead bodies and "salvaged" victims, i.e. those killed by unknown assailants, though the suspicion is often on government agents.

Eventually, despite its ill reputation, settlers started to populate Bagong Silang and other areas of North Caloocan, coinciding with the sharp increase in the rate of urbanization in the country's National Capital Region. This was also the time when demolitions in the central commercial areas of Metro Manila in the 1990s pushed urban poor residents to the peripheries of the region, most notably in North Caloocan. The transformation of the area is exemplified by Camarin's Barangay 178, which now has a large residential community and a bustling commercial center. In the past, it used to be a dumpsite before it was occupied by urban poor residents. Recently, a Korean investor bought this piece of land. He intends to build a columbarium in the area.

As of 2014, Bagong Silang or Barangay 176 is the country's biggest barangay unit with a population of 243,878 or about 16 percent of the city's total population. This is already the size of a municipal unit and congressional district in the Philippines.

In drafting a medium-term development program in 2016, the city government cited the "continuous illegal construction and uncontrolled proliferation of informal settler families at a vast [tract] of land which is privately owned but unidentified lot owner and abandoned lot" as

a major issue of concern in North Caloocan. Based on 2013 data, Caloocan has 54,953 informal settler families, which accounts for 17.19 percent of the population, and of which 78.57 percent are in North Caloocan. It is estimated that North Caloocan settlers who do not have formal ownership/land rights/rental agreement occupy 578.8 hectares of land. The local government has categorized this group of residents as "rent-free households."

Despite being the third most populated city in Metro Manila, Caloocan in 2014 only ranked thirteenth in terms of the number of registered businesses, which reflects the lower number of employment options for the local labor population. But within Caloocan, there is a huge disparity in the quality of living, economic profile, and delivery of services between the north and the south. In 2013, around 73 percent of total registered commercial establishment are in the south. About 62.7 percent of vocational and technical schools providing training to young adults are also concentrated in the south. There is a manufacturing hub in the north, located along Llano Road near Novaliches and Victoria Wave near Tala, but they are inadequate to meet the burgeoning labor force.

The north only has twenty-three health centers and its ratio to the local population is 1:47,116. With 397 hospital beds, its ratio to the population is registered at 1:2,573. During the 2014–2015 school year, North Caloocan had 106,565 elementary students with a classroom-student ratio of 1:84. It had 62,295 high school students with a classroom-student ratio of 1:90. South Caloocan has a slightly better classroom-student ratio. The local government has acknowledged that the severe classroom shortage has forced schools to adopt three shifts for their classes, putting a strain on the health conditions of students and teachers.

What these socioeconomic indicators signify is that despite the implementation of so-called modernization initiatives in the city, North Caloocan continues to lag owing to years, if not decades, of neglect. Poverty, homelessness, corruption, and joblessness plague the north, which lead to rampant criminality, including the proliferation of illegal drug operations.

Research Scope and Methods

The researcher initially relied on media reports in exploring the impact of tokhang in North Caloocan. Verifying data with official government

sources, especially at the LGU level, posed some challenges and difficulties. The Caloocan City Police Headquarters was burned down on November 14, 2017, and only administrative case files were saved. The PNP has insisted that only the president can authorize the release of data pertaining to tokhang operations in every barangay. Additional Electronic Freedom of Information (eFOI) requests sent to the PNP were also rejected. The case of Lenin Baylon, a ten-year-old from Camarin who died from a gunshot wound illustrates the difficulty of ascertaining the real number of tokhang victims in the city and elsewhere. For the relatives to retrieve his body from the funeral parlor, they were asked by the authorities to agree to alter the cause of death to pneumonia.

But through informal channels, some pertinent data from LGU offices were acquired, while the 2018 budget deliberations in the House of Representatives also yielded relevant documents related to tokhang. Members of Caloocan-based people's organizations gave valuable support in conducting field interviews and soliciting information from various sources in North Caloocan. They recorded testimonies from relatives of victims and residents who witnessed tokhang operations. They also have previous documentation of how tokhang was introduced in the community and the protests they mounted in opposition to this. They served as the primary reference and guide in explaining the geographical complexities of North Caloocan, the varied responses of barangays after tokhang was implemented, and the "social disarticulation" it caused in the community. Due to security concerns, some specific information pertaining to individuals and groups in the communities discussed in the paper are withheld.

There were numerous anecdotal references in mainstream and social media about tokhang killings in North Caloocan, which the research attempted to substantiate and analyze. In the end, the paper only cited cases which were personally known to grassroots organizers. These cases were evaluated in relation to their relevance in understanding the LGU role in implementing the police-led tokhang campaign and their long-term impact on the community. The paper focused on tokhang-related incidents which took place from July 2016 up to December 2017, but it also scrutinized government rulings and independent listing of tokhang-related deaths until the start of the midterm election period in early 2019.

TOKHANG IN NUMBERS

The number of drug-related killings in Caloocan is lower (373) compared to the number of fatalities for Quezon City (400) and Manila (463) as of June 2018, yet Caloocan is consistently touted as the "ground zero" of tokhang killings (David et al. 2018, table 2). Perhaps it is related to Caloocan's previous reputation as a dangerous frontier, but this could be more likely related to high-profile tokhang cases in the city such as the killing of Kian Loyd delos Santos. The gruesome killing of seventeen-year-old Kian in a drug operation was perhaps the most publicized testament to the reckless and abusive nature of tokhang due to CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts that run counter to the policemen's claim that he resisted arrest (Bartolome 2018). Instead, Kian was seen being helplessly dragged by the police and, moments before being shot multiple times, was seen pleading for his life. His death, more than sparking widespread condemnation, opened an investigation of the drug war in the Senate, and even drew international attention to the bloody war. The investigation of the policemen implicated in the murder of Kian ran for two years but it has nonetheless concluded with the perpetrators being brought to justice.

Alongside Kian's death was that of South Korean businessman Jee Ick Joo, who was reportedly arrested in a tokhang operation, killed inside Camp Crame (the national headquarters itself of the PNP), was cremated in a funeral parlor in Caloocan that is owned by a retired cop, and his ashes flushed down the toilet.

These two cases triggered widespread public outrage and forced President Rodrigo Duterte to suspend tokhang. The case of Carl Angelo Arnaiz, another teenager who was allegedly tortured and killed by Caloocan police, also sustained protests against tokhang.

LGU support for tokhang in Caloocan is also highly visible and concrete. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) has been citing Caloocan as a model LGU in terms of its support to the government's campaign against illegal drugs.

It is also in Caloocan where grassroots-based spontaneous and organized protests against tokhang directly and consistently challenged the police and the government's justification about the rampant drug-related extrajudicial killings. Then, Kian's case led to numerous protest actions which put the spotlight on the extent of tokhang operations in the city.

But data from the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) confirm that Caloocan is not the priority of its antidrug campaign. There were only eighty-eight PDEA-led barangay operations in Caloocan from July 2016 to September 2018 compared to 362 in Quezon City and 453 in Manila. Joint operations involving PDEA and other agencies covered only ten barangays in Caloocan compared to 103 in Manila and 570 in Quezon City.

Meanwhile, PNP data from December 2017 to June 2018 showed that the local PNP was more active than PDEA in Caloocan. It covered 101 barangays in Caloocan compared to 73 in Quezon City and 106 in Manila. Caloocan has 188 barangays.

The police put the number of drug pushers in Caloocan at 6,500 compared to more than 50,000 for Manila and Quezon City, respectively. But the Caloocan police seemed more aggressive because despite the city's lower number of suspected drug personalities, it netted 18,753 drug surrenderees compared to 20,714 in Quezon City and 49,000 in Manila.

The 2017 DILG report cited the government's increased drug operations for the lowering of crime incidences in 2016 and 2017, but it admitted that homicide cases went up by 11 percent. There were 2,336 homicide cases in 2016 compared to 2,592 in 2017 for a total of 4,928. But an eFOI report by the PNP recorded 5,882 homicide cases from July 2016 to March 2017.

Despite pegging the number of homicide cases between 2016 and 2017 to less than 6,000, the PNP reported in September 2018 that the number has reached 25,000. This puts into question their claim of crime deterrence by the so-called war on drugs.

The government's "real numbers" infographics showed 2,235 drug-related homicide cases from July 2016 until January 2018. This went up to 2,903 in September 2018 according to a PNP report submitted to the House of Representatives. The breakdown of homicide cases which are not drug-related showed 3,369 incidents linked to "heated arguments" and 5,666 incidents caused by "personal grudges." But how many of these nondrug-related cases included tokhang cases that were misreported as homicide under investigation? In a letter addressed to the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives dated September 11, 2018, Police Director Elmo Sarona of the PNP Investigation and Detective Management clarified that the category "homicide cases under investigation" or HCUI refers to all killings outside police operations:

TABLE 1. Legal bases for the role of local government units in implementing tokhang

Date	Issuances	Agency
August 3, 2016	Board Regulation No. 1, Series of 2016 - Guidelines in the Implementation of Operation: "Lawmen"	Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB)
August 3, 2016	Board Regulation No. 3, Series of 2016 - Guidelines on Handling Voluntary Surrender of Drug Personalities	DDB
September 19, 2016	Board Regulation No. 4, Series of 2016 - Oplan Sagip - Guidelines on Voluntary Surrender of Drug Users and Dependents and Monitoring Mechanism of Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Campaigns	DDB
October 11, 2016	Executive Order No. 4 Providing for the Establishment and Support of Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Centers Throughout the Philippines	Office of the President of the Philippines (OP)
February 14, 2017	Board Regulation No. 3 Series of 2017: Strengthening the Implementation of Barangay Drug Clearing Program	DDB
April 3, 2017	Memorandum Circular No. 2017-58 - Board Regulation No. 3 Series of 2017 re: Strengthening the Implementation of Barangay Drug Clearing Program	Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
April 27, 2017	Memorandum Circular No. 2017-64 - Compliance to Peace and Order and Anti-Illegal Drug Related Issuances	DILG
May 22, 2017	Memorandum Circular No. 2017-67 - Amending DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2017-64, Entitled "Compliance to Peace and Order and Anti-Illegal Drug Related Issuances"	DILG
August 30, 2017	Ordinance No. 0699 S.2017 - An Ordinance Creating an Office for the Caloocan Anti-Drug Abuse (OCADA) and for Other Purposes.	Caloocan City Council
October 10, 2017	Memorandum from the President - Implementation of Republic Act 9165 otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002"	OP

TABLE 1 (*continued*)

Date	Issuances	Agency
May 21, 2018	Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2018-01 - Implementing Guidelines on the Functionality and Effectiveness of Local Anti-Drug Abuse Councils	DILG-DDB
August 8, 2018	Memorandum Circular No. 2018-125 - Guidelines for the Implementation of Community-Based Drug Rehabilitation Program	DILG

> From July 1, 2016 to September 3, 2018, a total of 25,564 HCUI were recorded by the PNP, of which 14,683 were already solved and cleared while 10,881 are still under investigation. However, based on the investigation conducted on these cases, *no case was tagged as "vigilante killings."* (emphasis added)

In another letter submitted to the Committee on Appropriations dated October 2, 2018—but this time by PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde—the police is categorically asserting that no tokhang-related vigilante killing has been reported in Metro Manila.

These two letters suggest that the oft-repeated 25,000 tokhang killings in media reports are actually categorized as HCUI. But on the other hand, the letters also undermine the argument put forward by the police that many of the drug-related killings are done by vigilantes.

WEAPONIZING THE LGU MANDATE

Tokhang did not create a new mechanism that would legitimize the increased participation of barangay units and city governments in the campaign against illegal drugs. Tokhang made use of existing laws and regulations to require the presence of LGU units in all phases of tokhang operations. For example, the revitalization of Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (BADACs) was done through a DILG memo signed by Secretary Mar Roxas on June 16, 2015. Also, the creation of local Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (ADACs) was pushed as early as 1998. What made tokhang unique is the linking of the antidrug campaign with the LGU mandate of drafting an anticriminality action plan and the enforcement of peace and order programs.

The PNP *Manual on Barangay Peacekeeping Operations and Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team*, published in 2009, mentioned the value of *ronda* (patrol) operations as a community peacekeeping activity because of the involvement of community members. Barangay officials and *tanod* members (barangay peace and security officers) are described as "force multipliers" in the daily peacekeeping activities under the supervision of a PNP officer. The manual categorized barangays as internal security operations-affected, crime-prone areas, religious conflict-affected, and affected by Muslim separatism. There is no separate category for drug-affected barangays. But under the DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2017-58, Board Regulation No. 3 Series of 2017 issued April 3, 2017, barangays are already classified whether they are drug-affected and if they are seriously affected, moderately affected, or slightly affected.

Tokhang appears to be the repackaging of the ronda operations involving PNP elements and barangay officials focused on eliminating the drug menace at the community level. The barangay LGUs are enjoined, through ADACs, to support and implement the five stages of tokhang: collection and validation of information, coordination, house-to-house visitation, processing and documentation, and monitoring and evaluation. In fact, the PNP's Command Memorandum Circular No. 16-2016, otherwise known as the Double Barrel memo issued on July 1, 2016, reminded designated team leaders to ensure the presence of ADAC members in all tokhang operations.

To boost compliance, PNP directives are supplemented by guidelines issued by DILG and the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) (table 1). These memos mandated barangays to provide not just a supporting role but a crucial responsibility in implementing tokhang. Consider the following tasks of barangay LGUs:

- For the preoperations of tokhang, barangay LGUs are required to submit information about drug personalities. This will be coordinated with the PNP which maintains not just one master list but several files which are categorized as the target list, wanted list, and watch list.
- BADACs process the voluntary surrender of drug personalities. They will make an initial assessment whether the surrenderee is eligible for community-based rehabilitation or whether the PNP should pursue the information provided by the individual.

- In the DILG memo issued in April 2017, BADACs are authorized to conduct "administrative searches" (regulatory inspection) of drug dens in order to strengthen the government's barangay drug clearing operations. Again, this indicates that the role of barangay LGUs in implementing tokhang is more than just assisting the PNP but participating in actual operations.
- Aside from joining law enforcement agencies during tokhang operations, BADACs are asked to sign the inventory of seized drugs and drug paraphernalia and serve as a witness during legal proceedings.
- Again, during the operation phase of tokhang, BADACs can arrest identified drug users/pushers through "citizen's arrest" in a buy-bust operation and serve search warrants.

Of note is the barangay officials' role in handling those who are involved with illegal drugs. Surrenderers sign a waiver as facilitated by the BADACs. The waiver authorizes government agencies to conduct not just a physical examination of the surrenderer but also to make a background investigation and gives it power to access the available personal records of the individual. A surrenderer, whether a user or pusher, is considered a suspect who may have committed other crimes. Aside from the interview, authorities can confiscate the surrenderer's phone to scan for more information. This is stipulated in DDB Board Regulation No. 3, series of 2016, dated August 3, 2016: "If the result of the initial interview is actionable, the surrenderer may be requested to submit his/her cellular phones for forensic examination to obtain more data and to support his/her voluntary confession."

The waiver becomes a legal instrument that enables the intrusion into the private lives of drug personalities, including mere habitual users of illegal drugs. It requires the surrenderer to report once a week for a period of six months while undergoing random drug testing. BADACs assist in the weekly monitoring of the status and whereabouts of surrenderers and drug personalities. This is supposed to be a rehabilitation process, but, in practice, it normalizes the criminalization of a social issue, which in many countries is considered a health problem.

The administrative instruments devised by national authorities sometimes go even beyond the case of the surrenderers and the role of barangay officials in anti-illegal drugs campaign. Ordinary citizens are

enjoined to do surveillance work. In tandem with the MASA MASID program,[2] the guidelines by DDB issued through its Board Regulation No. 3, series of 2017, dated February 14, 2017 engender citizen surveillance. Community residents are encouraged to report drug-related cases through an award or commendation system, or both, under the program of strengthening barangay drug clearing operations.

Issued by the DDB on August 3, 2016, Operation Lawmen is "the reward or award program for law enforcers or members of the anti-illegal drug units/teams or task forces, including the support unit/s." This could be the bounty system referred to in news reports about police operatives running after a quota of tokhang operations in exchange for monetary rewards, hence the implementation of this program must be probed in relation to the increase in antidrug operations involving law enforcement agencies with support from LGUs.

Did Barangays Comply?

Since July 2016, the researcher counted at least eight memos issued by the DILG and DDB requiring LGUs from the provincial to the barangay levels to allot funding for the operation of ADACs. There are two ways to interpret this: the government is committed to succeed in fighting illegal drugs by guaranteeing the cooperation of LGUs, which explains the repeated instructions to fund ADACs; on the other hand, it can also mean that not all LGUs are providing counterpart funds in support of tokhang guidelines like the creation of ADACs at the minimum. The memo issued by DILG in May 21, 2018, Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2018-0 provided detailed guidelines on how ADACs should operate, the local legislations that LGUs should

2. The MASA MASID (Mamamayang Ayaw Sa Anomalya, Mamamayang, [*sic*] Ayaw sa Iligal na Droga [Citizens Against Anomalies, Citizens Against Illegal Drugs]) Program is an initiative of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) codified in DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2016-116, Implementation of MASA MASID, that seeks to institutionalize the voluntary participation of private actors and CSOs in enforcing President Duterte's war against crime, corruption, and, most importantly, illegal drugs at the community level. It seeks to accomplish its objectives through a three-part implementation strategy done at the local level which involves: intensified advocacy and education campaigns, establishing a reporting mechanism for gathering information on illegal drug activities; and a Community-Based Rehabilitation Program (CBRP).

pass in support of ADACs, the reporting mechanism between ADACs and other national government agencies, and funding requirements to sustain the work of ADACs.

But forcing all LGUs to prioritize the funding of ADACs can put greater pressure on the management of local revenues, which are often inadequate to finance the basic needs of constituents, especially social services such as education, health, and housing. Instead of helping the community, this could heighten instability because local resources intended to aid the vulnerable segments of the population are diverted to fund the bureaucratic support system for tokhang operations.

On July 25, 2018, the DILG organized a workshop attended by Metro Manila councilors wherein the agency presented its assessment of the negative public feedback with regard to the government's antidrug campaign. A DILG official blamed the lack of LGU support for tokhang in terms of establishing institutional mechanisms intended to boost the government's antidrug campaign. The same official also warned LGUs of possible sanctions if ADACs are not created and funded and local legislations are not passed to support tokhang operations. This threat reflects the failure of DILG and other national government agencies to get the absolute support of LGUs. Also, it highlights how the controversial features of tokhang are causing contradictions between government units. The workshop cited several LGUs that are providing exemplary support to the government's antidrug campaign. One of these LGUs is the city of Caloocan.

Caloocan as Role Model

For many years, Phase 12 in Barangay 188, Tala, was known as North Caloocan's drug den, where a shabu laboratory existed. It remained a drug hot spot despite the change of leadership in the city's LGU. After the electoral victory of Duterte, Phase 12 became one of the first areas targeted by tokhang operations, which led to the killing of its barangay captain and most of the *kagawads* (councilors). After this, the antidrug operations spread from Phase 12 to other areas of North Caloocan.

Tokhang operations implied LGU support and this was evident in Caloocan. Consider the following:

- In 2014 and 2015, the city's antidrug campaign primarily consisted of conducting seminars and sports activities through the Office of the Vice Mayor with no specified

funding. In 2016, PHP 300,000.00 was allocated for the said activities. In August 2017, the city strengthened the Caloocan Anti-Drug Abuse Office (more popularly known as OCADA, probably referring to Mayor Oscar "Oca" Malapitan) by passing an ordinance allotting funds for its staffing requirements. The city's proposed 2019 budget includes PHP 11.2 million for a drug rehabilitation center and PHP 49.5 million for OCADA. Caloocan's proposed ordinance with a substantial amount of funding for OCADA was the city's direct endorsement of DILG's order to revitalize ADACs.

- Barangay LGUs were given explicit instructions by the city government to cooperate with the PNP's tokhang operations. A formal assembly was called by Mayor Malapitan on February 26–28, 2017, which gathered all barangay captains to meet PNP Caloocan about the implementation of tokhang.
- City councilors were discouraged from providing burial assistance and visiting the wake of tokhang victims.
- After the death of Kian in August 2017, the city government organized ronda operations composed of barangay officials with tanod members, police, and assigned city councilors per zone and barangays to implement ordinances banning the selling of liquor to minors (passed in November 2005), regulating the use of videoke and karaoke machines (passed in November 2016), and mandating new curfew hours for children (passed in August 2017). The ronda lasted for almost a month, where the combined forces of PNP and the LGU conducted checkpoints and barangay visits every night after 10:00 p.m. It was meant to express LGU support to the PNP, despite the backlash after the killing of Kian, and to justify the arrest of minors while tokhang operations were being undertaken.
- Despite the announcement of the Department of Education about its refusal to conduct mandatory drug tests, some Caloocan schools initially tried to proceed with this but were stopped by parents who objected to this scheme. In some schools, such as the Cielito Zamora High School Annex, students from Grades 7 to 10 were

required to sign a waiver informing them and their families of the random drug testing which can be conducted by the school.

Tokhang Killings

Below are the high-profile drug-related killings in North Caloocan that signaled the government's aggressive implementation of tokhang. These killings reverberated across North Caloocan not only because they involved prominent barangay leaders but also because minors became collateral damage in the tokhang operations. Most of the killings were committed inside dense residential communities, suggesting that the killers were either familiar with the locality or were backed by a local network supplying them with ground information. Some of these cases were reported in mainstream media but there was little reference to their local significance and the aftermath of the killings.

Nasampolan:[3] The Killings of Barangay Officials

Phase 12 in Barangay 188 is a notorious drug hot spot in North Caloocan. For many years, it was widely known as a drug lab yet it continued to operate despite the change of leadership in the city LGU. There is only one narrow passageway to this "gated community," which is also bordered by the Marilao River in the north, making it a suitable place to "cook" drugs and transport these goods to Bulacan and other parts of Central Luzon. On June 25, 2016, Barangay Captain Edres Romuros Domato was killed. Edres was a suspected operator or protector of the drug lab. His son Edison Domato, who was the barangay's number one kagawad, became the captain but was also killed in September 2016. Members of the Domato family soon left the community. The rest of the barangay kagawads were also killed until only one member of the council was left. As of January 2019, illegal drug transactions are still rampant in the area.

Barangay Captain Onofre "Obet" delos Santos of Caybiga was killed while presiding over a meeting of the Vista Verde Homeowners Association. Masked men entered the room and ordered everyone to bow their heads before shooting the village head. Onofre was a close

3. Targeted to serve as an example or warning to the community.

friend of Barangay Captain Edres Domato of Phase 12 who was killed for his alleged links to illegal drug operations.

Meanwhile, in Camarin, a barangay leader was killed beside a police station just minutes after he was seen talking to a police officer on patrol. A child got hit by a stray bullet, but the family was threatened with violence if they filed a complaint. The local leader was killed on January 12, 2017, the same period when barangay officials were being asked to submit names of suspected drug users, pushers, and other personalities.

Nanlaban:[4] Michael Librea

The family of Michael Librea had been trying to contact him for two days before they found his dead body riddled with four bullets on July 30, 2017, at a funeral parlor in Norzagaray, Bulacan. The police said Michael resisted arrest (*nanlaban*) during a sting operation. His family denies that he is a drug dealer and they are questioning his inclusion in Bulacan's drug watch list, since he is from Barangay 170 in Caloocan. Michael's funeral was attended by hundreds of friends and residents from Diamante Subdivision, including motorcycle riders like him. Funeral marchers displayed banners and shouted slogans asserting Librea's innocence. This spontaneous display of dissent marked the first time that a protest against tokhang was held in the community.

Napagkamalan:[5] Jimmy Doble

On October 3, 2016, Sitio 3 Camarin resident Jimmy Borromeo Doble was killed by a "riding in tandem" (two men riding one motorcycle). His family insisted he was a victim of mistaken identity linked to a tokhang operation. Doble's funeral was attended by hundreds of community members wearing t-shirts with a printed message of "Justice." Since then, residents in the *eskinita* (alley) where Doble's family lives became more alert and vigilant by monitoring motorcyclists who are not from the community. Youth volunteers organized themselves into a self-defense unit posted at the narrow entrance and exit of Sitio 3.

4. A suspect who resisted arrest and assaulted the arresting officers.
5. Mistaken identity.

Nadamay[6]

Phase 8 Massacre

News reports mentioned a suspected drug pusher, Jay-R Santor, as the target of an alleged shootout on December 28, 2016, at Phase 8 in Bagong Silang. But the incident led to the killing of eight people, five of whom were minors, including an unborn child. The minors were Angelito Soriano (sixteen-years-old), Jonel Segovia (fifteen-years-old), and Sonny Espinosa (sixteen-years-old). The massacre site is in a place called Bagsak which refers to the "*bagsakan*" (dumping ground) of informal settlers in Bagong Silang. The other part of Phase 8 is called Balwarte (bastion) where there is reported rampant use of illegal drugs.

Redemptorist Brother Ciriaco Santiago[7] was able to interview the family of the minors and offered this alternative narrative of what really happened that night. He called it the "massacre of the innocents":

> They had dinner. A karaoke machine added fun to the gathering. They were singing their hearts out. It was a happy and rousing night until a single gunshot stopped the singing and dancing. A group of armed masked men barged into the front door, followed by random open firing which instantly killed seven people inside. One of the victims was a young pregnant woman.
>
> The wake was short. The victims' families and relatives cannot afford a decent burial for their dead. Their option was to bury them all together—alongside each other. It was not a hard decision to make for the parents of three of them. Their parents knew that the boys would want to have it that way. It is their way of sealing their sons' friendship, which they managed to keep until death.

During the burial, a large group of friends and fraternity brothers of the minors sang joyful songs and rap music as an expression of their mourning.

The killings at Phase 8 sparked outrage across North Caloocan and inspired residents to organize a protest march from the parish church to the community during the fortieth-day after-death memorial service on February 5, 2017. The protest was significant because it was the first

6. Got caught in the shootings.
7. For a feature on Brother Ciriaco Santiago, see Palatino 2017.

organized resistance against the violent impact of tokhang. During the march, some onlookers yelled at them and accused them of being "defenders of drug addicts." But many also showed their approval and even barangay tanods were helpful during the march.

Lenin Baylon

Ten-year-old Lenin Baylon was playing with friends on a pathway in Phase 6 Camarin one morning when an antidrug operation erupted in their midst and rattled residents, forcing those in the streets to run for safety. During the alleged shootout, Lenin was hit by stray bullets on his leg and back. He was near his house when he met his father, Rodrigo, who started looking for his son after hearing gun shots. Lenin died in the arms of his father. Lenin's family could not retrieve his body at the funeral parlor unless they agreed to change the cause of death to pneumonia. They were told that this was needed because they will not be able to get financial assistance from the local government if the death was linked to tokhang. They relented but only in order to get the body. After a few months, Lenin's family was assisted by church groups and other human rights advocates in exhuming the remains of the boy in order to conduct an independent autopsy. In January 2018, they were able to petition and change the boy's cause of death from pneumonia to gunshot wounds.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF TOKHANG

North Caloocan residents felt the impact of tokhang after the consecutive killings of Barangay 188 Phase 12 officials. This left the impression that notorious drug personalities were being singled out but many were still shocked by the daring methods used to kill the barangay officials. After the Phase 12 killings and the attacks against some barangay officials in the district, tokhang soon spread to other barangays and instantly created terror.

Another visible sign of a tokhang operation was the setting up of police checkpoints in almost all access roads of barangays. Police checkpoints were common in North Caloocan, but they were seen only in major roads in the Zabarte area and Congressional Road Extension that links the city to Bulacan. But this changed during the first few months of the Duterte government when police checkpoints became ubiquitous in nearly all barangays of North Caloocan. Some

motorcycle riders described the checkpoints as "Police 7-11" because they were often placed near 7-11 convenience stores, which were also expanding their branches in North Caloocan. The checkpoints were supposed to provide protection, but many residents felt harassed because of *kotong* (extortion) cops and the aggressive interrogation conducted by police patrols especially during tokhang operations.

Barangay units were tapped to provide the initial data about the extent of drug use and illegal drug trade in their jurisdictions. Their early role was to submit a drug list of users and pushers. During a human rights workshop organized by Ibon Foundation in May 2017, some barangay officials from North Caloocan expressed frustration because the drug watch list they compiled and forwarded to the police soon became a death list. They said they were torn between complying with the law and listening to their conscience. Barangays, which are traditional conduits for political patronage (read: pork barrel) especially in vote-rich North Caloocan, have been reoriented to prioritize the setting up of tokhang mechanisms at the grassroots level.

Tokhang disrupted many lives and communities. It saw the heavy deployment of police, the mobilization of erstwhile responsive and friendly barangay LGUs in implementing tokhang, incentivizing citizens to monitor their neighbors, while no less than the country's president is providing the ideological arguments in running the drug war until it succeeds in weeding out society's so-called undesirables.

Spontaneous public outrage against tokhang emerged when minors like Lenin Baylon were killed or neighbors became witnesses to brutal tokhang operations. Public perception against tokhang became more palpable after the massacre of three minors on December 28, 2016, in Phase 8. Protests and collective actions by people's organizations within the district were openly organized in January 2017. Funeral marches turned into protests, rallies targeted police headquarters, and major street intersections in Tala, Bagong Silang, and Camarin became protest centers.

"Know Your Rights"

The "Phase 8 Massacre" in December 2016 jolted community activists into action. For the past six months, North Caloocan had been gripped with panic. The terror effect of news reports enumerating the spike of drug-related extrajudicial killings across the country was amplified by daily stories of tokhang raids, encounters, and shootouts in North Caloocan. Police deployments had been intensified, most

barangay leaders were dutifully submitting drug watch lists while those perceived to be uncooperative were being killed, and the whole community was seemingly placed under constant surveillance.

The first challenge was to address the fear of the people, including activists who were recalling the spate of killings during the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo government. The next task was to organize a campaign that will mobilize the people without directly antagonizing agencies in charge of tokhang.

With these considerations in mind, the "Know Your Rights" lecture caravan was conceptualized by activist groups in the community such as Gabriela, Anakpawis, and Anakbayan. Later, they formed a broader network of concerned residents and sought legal aid from national human rights groups. Their first project was the launch of an education campaign that seeks to fight fear by empowering community members with knowledge about their human rights and protective laws in response to tokhang.

Through small group discussions and other information awareness activities, the campaign aimed to confront the violent impact of tokhang by uniting residents and organizing them in exposing the excesses of the police and the accountability of local and national authorities while affirming their rights as citizens.

A primer was prepared explaining the features of tokhang, its application in Caloocan and elsewhere, its victims and the threats it poses to ordinary citizens, the pertinent laws in asserting individual rights, and the importance of solidarity and collective response in order to survive and win against state brutality.

Activists in Tala comprised the first group to discuss the primer in January 2017. This inspired them to reach out to their family, friends, and neighbors in organizing study sessions. A paralegal team composed of nine individuals was formed to organize the lecture series.

Formal and informal discussions were held in houses, garages, basketball courts, daycare centers, alleys, church courtyards, and even barangay halls.

North Caloocan-based activists and church workers led the discussions while participants shared testimonies about their experience with tokhang. The lecture became an opportunity to exchange practical knowledge on what to do during a tokhang raid. It was presented through a simple Powerpoint presentation filled with diagrams and photos identifying the agencies and officials in charge of implementing

tokhang, the rise of drug-related killings in Caloocan, and a step-by-step guide in response to a tokhang operation.

A hotline was set up to spread information and provide access to residents who were interested in resisting tokhang but unable to join the lecture series.

Volunteers also provided counseling, legal advice, medical aid, and other forms of assistance to families of tokhang victims. They partnered with formations like the Stop the Killings network and Rise Up for Life and for Rights to sustain these activities.

After several months of conducting the education campaign, activists were finally able to mobilize community residents in protesting against tokhang in Bagong Silang, Tala, and Camarin. Protest centers were identified, which include public areas near busy intersections, police headquarters, and commercial centers.

The lecture series proved effective in countering the fear propagated by tokhang implementers. It helped in reviving and sustaining grassroots resistance not just against tokhang but other manifestations of state terror.

The campaign gained momentum and boosted the confidence of activists to hold a protest at PNP Caloocan headquarters in the South.

After many months of responding to tokhang incidents, news about the killing of teenager Kian delos Santos in the South made it easier for activists to form and deploy a campaign team to drumbeat the issue.

Before the case of Kian gained nationwide attention, people's organizations in North Caloocan were already articulating the situation in their communities in Manila-based multisectoral protests. Mass protests against Kian's killing saw various groups organizing activities in Caloocan to denounce tokhang.

The protests were impressive, since they challenged the prevailing view that tokhang is embraced without question by the local population. The campaign mobilized people to speak out, turned mourning into rage, and provided a space where residents can equip themselves with basic legal knowledge about defending themselves from illegal arrests. It served as a preemptive action against state-backed attacks targeting community members.

The 2017 protests in North Caloocan reflected the broader opposition against tokhang across the country. The community-based actions contributed to amplifying the voices denouncing the surge of drug-related killings. Overall, the national and local protests forced the

Duterte government to suspend tokhang while recalibrating its campaign against illegal drugs. But the protest organizers themselves acknowledged that the street actions and study sessions only reached a limited segment of the population in North Caloocan. Sustaining the momentum of the protests proved to be difficult. Localized protests became harder to organize after tokhang was suspended twice in 2017. Oplan Galugad targeting *tambays* (loiterers) in the same urban poor communities supplemented tokhang in 2018 but this did not lead to widespread protests.

A New Tokhang?

Despite the public outcry in 2016 and 2017 against tokhang killings, the government continued to insist that the campaign against illegal drugs was still a priority. It was during this time that community rehabilitation (Community-Based Rehabilitation Program or CBRP) led by ADACs was highlighted as the new principal feature of the government's campaign against illegal drugs. The DILG emphasized that ADACs are composed of officials from LGUs, public schools, faith-based groups, and civil society organizations. In October 2018, Sangguniang Kabataan (elected barangay youth council) leaders in Caloocan participated in a training during which speakers from PNP and DILG emphasized the role of BADACs in the antidrug campaign.

We can either interpret this as the government's belated recognition that a comprehensive CBRP led by ADACs should have been the focus from the start in addressing the drug problem instead of the controversial PNP-led tokhang operations; on the other hand, it can also mean that a more sinister type of tokhang is being readied, with civilian authorities supposedly taking the lead in the antidrug campaign. If the first is true, it means the Duterte government engaged in a brutal social experiment that cost the lives of thousands and could have been avoided if it first tried alternative programs requiring the total but peaceful mobilization of the LGU machinery. But if the second is the real intent, it could mean more violence, with ADACs supervising the expanded implementation of antidrug programs while the police are left to focus on tokhang-style special operations. During the workshop organized by DILG last July 2018, an official talked about family-based accreditation and the increased participation of other institutions in the community to level up the antidrug drive.

Soon, the BADAC became a venue to implement DILG directives even if the matter is not directly related to tokhang. In particular, the BADAC was infused with programs that are supposedly in aid of the fight against illegal drugs but are actually components of the counterinsurgency campaign. This was confirmed during a BADAC meeting held in Camarin in January 2019 to elect cluster leaders and clarify their roles during barangay drug clearing operations. The meeting was attended by barangay staff and leaders of various local associations. A cluster is composed of twenty to thirty families per area. During the meeting, a police senior inspector informed the participants that cluster heads are required to fill out BADAC forms identifying the number of families in the area, their occupation, activities, and membership in an organization. The police mentioned that this is meant to identify drug users and dealers, but he added that this is also intended to monitor the presence of New People's Army members and communists in the community. Activists who organized the Know Your Rights campaign expressed concern that those who publicly opposed tokhang could be the target of the BADAC reporting mechanism.

TOKHANG AS "SOCIAL DISARTICULATION"[8]

After more than a year of saturating North Caloocan with tokhang raids characterized by almost weekly spectacles of dead bodies and arbitrary arrests, the trauma created by this violent phase of the government's campaign against illegal drugs is reflected in the formation of an impression among residents that the killings victimized hundreds, if not thousands of their friends, families, and neighbors. After seeing empirical data about the extent of killings in the district, all the respondents of the research said they believe that the number is low, the killings number more than what the media has reported, and the violence of tokhang was an unprecedented phenomenon that affected all.

Tokhang's bloody legacy continues to stigmatize drug users while raising a certain level of paranoia and hysteria among residents. Every time there is a gun attack or a crime is committed against someone in the community, the initial reaction of many is to attribute it to a tokhang-related operation. Whether accurate or not, it raises the

8. The concept was adopted by the Caloocan LGU from Cernea (1997).

specter of tokhang in the eyes of residents while conditioning their attitudes and behavior on how to avoid being implicated in the government's "war on drugs." In other words, residents have become more cautious in their actions to survive the rampaging police-led tokhang operatives. Reloaded or not, tokhang under the Duterte regime has remained an insidious form of social control.

When relocating informal settler families, local governments assess the readiness of communities and one of the indicators they use is called "social disarticulation," which they define as the "disruption of existing social fabric." Michael Cernea offers a more devastating elaboration of what social disarticulation entails:

> Forced displacement tears apart the existing social fabric: it disperses and fragments communities, dismantles patterns of social organization and interpersonal ties; kinship groups become scattered as well. Life-sustaining informal networks of reciprocal help, local voluntary associations, and self-organized mutual service arrangements are dismantled. The destabilization of community life is apt to generate a typical state of anomie, crisis-laden insecurity, and loss of sense of cultural identity . . . (Cernea 1997, 1575)

The impact of tokhang could be similar to the demolition of communities but its methods are more brutal and sinister while shrouded in extralegal secrecy and affects a wider segment of the local population. It intensifies state intrusion into the lives of the poor, overkill police deployment is legitimized, and the community's state of underdevelopment is entirely blamed on the drug problem. It also undermines solidarity among neighbors by instigating citizen surveillance, which makes it more difficult to promote unity in challenging the reign of oppressive local authorities. Community solidarity is shattered by tokhang, where everybody is seen as a suspect or snitch in a supposedly drug-affected barangay.

The ferocity of tokhang is made more evident in a community which was originally designated as a relocation area for informal settlers but whose residents have been targeted once more by a government program that resembles demolition operations.

Tokhang's controversial features such as extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and expanded presence of the police are evident in North Caloocan. Support from LGU officials is also visible and this is sustained by well-funded programs that advocate the fulfillment of tokhang objectives. Tokhang's many uses for politicians in power,

especially those who are eager to protect their future mandate, are reflected in the case of North Caloocan.

The "shock and awe" slaying of barangay leaders in Phase 12 mirrored the brutal methods of tokhang at the national level. Yet, illegal drug transactions are still rampant in the barangay like in other parts of the country. It points to the failure of the tokhang approach and also the senselessness of continuing a discredited program that merely unleashed a tremendous wave of violence and suffering.

To probe what tokhang did to urban poor communities can be a depressing endeavor, but again, the story of North Caloocan also offers some hope: that in spite of the ruthlessness and tokhang-related terror inflicted on the local population, there were citizens who learned to resist inspiring courage in others. That there is another way to deal with tokhang other than to stay silent or survive its brutality. That it is possible to fight back.❁

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The Manobo Community of Han-ayan: Enduring Continuities and Changes in Militarization

AUGUSTO B. GATMAYTAN

ABSTRACT. The study attempts to weave together a partial social history of the indigenous Manobo community of Han-ayan, which has suffered spectacular violence at the hands of paramilitaries backed by government troops in 2015, months before Rodrigo Duterte captured the presidency in 2016. Employing the concept of "containment zones" and "filter points," it seeks to create an initial phenomenology of contemporary militarization in a hinterland setting under the Duterte administration, and explores the meaning of the violence of the state's counterinsurgency efforts that the targeted community holds. Through key informant interviews conducted during the latter half of 2018, and supplemented by participant-observation that the security conditions of the research site allowed, the case of the Manobo of Han-ayan reveals both continuities and novel measures in the state's performance of violence whose cumulative effect on the community leaves them in a state of profound precarity and insecurity, constantly anticipating the state's next act of violence.

KEYWORDS. Manobo · Han-ayan · militarization · counterinsurgency · containment zones · filter points

Introduction

This article presents a case study that explores the impact of the policies of the current administration of President Rodrigo Duterte on the human rights situation in a section of Surigao del Sur province. To that end, I intentionally sought a research site that had experienced human rights violations during the incumbency of Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, the immediate predecessor of Duterte. This would enable me to compare the human rights situation in the study site under the two administrations and, thus, better assess the broader patterns or trends affecting the local human rights situation. In my search for a possible field site, my attention was almost immediately drawn to the

indigenous Manobo community of Han-ayan, which suffered spectacular violence at the hands of paramilitaries backed by government troops in 2015 (Espina-Varona 2015), months before Duterte captured the presidency in 2016.

Data for this article was gathered principally through key informant interviews conducted during two separate visits to Han-ayan and neighboring villages during the latter half of 2018. I had originally intended to rely more on participant observation in my data gathering, but security conditions at the research site and other operational constraints compelled me to shift to the methodologically more "efficient" key informant interviews. I did, however, apply participant observation techniques to the extent that circumstances allowed. I am reasonably confident that I have sufficient data to meet the objectives of my case study—i.e., to outline the human rights situation in the research area before and during the Duterte administration—and of the larger "Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy" (VHRD) in the Philippines project.

I am aware that unlike most of the other case studies conducted for the VHRD project, my paper focuses on counterinsurgent violence in a rural hinterland in eastern Mindanao. Indeed, *tokhang*—a term that has come to stand for the Philippine state's anti-illegal drugs campaign—never once came up in any of my conversations with my Manobo interlocutors. The closest I came to a reference to it was an offhand comment by a Manobo villager to the effect that if their communities were more accessible to the police, their local leaders would also have been tagged and killed as drug dealers. This article may thus be read as a counterweight to the general tendency to regard contemporary state violence in the Philippines as largely urban-centered, focused on the ongoing anti-illegal drug campaign of the Duterte administration, and led by the police rather than military forces of the state. The study is also significant to the extent that it documents and presents community-level experiences and understandings of militarization, and points to related areas for further research, particularly in the subfield of the anthropology of war and violence, with its current focus on peoples' experience of conflict (Sluka 2013, 171).

HISTORY AND THEORY, STORIES AND ETHICS

This article is an attempt to weave together a partial social history of the community of Han-ayan, an initial phenomenology of militarization

under the current administration, and an exploration of the meaning that the violence of the state's counterinsurgency efforts holds for them. I will address each of these three aims in turn.

I speak here of a partial social history in three senses: it is partial in the sense, first, of being incomplete. The shared and cumulative experiences of militarization suffered by the Manobo of Han-ayan are quite considerable, and to take note of each and every incident of abuse, loss, or displacement since the 1970s would make the introductory section of this case study far too long and unwieldy as well as emotionally draining. Readers who are particularly interested in a detailed history of militarization in this area are directed to the master's thesis of Fr. Raymond Ambray (Ambray 2019), who makes a fair attempt to present this history in greater detail. Here, I will only discuss selected and particular sets of incidents that, on one hand, are suggestive of the general character of experiences of militarization in this area; and on the other hand, have particular significance for my Manobo respondents, and, thus, for this paper's argument. The historical material I present is also partial in the second sense of being shaped by the particular experiences and understandings of the Manobo. Otherwise stated, I offer here an abbreviated version of the Manobos' own account and understanding of their experiences. This means that while I recognize that the military, as well as those Manobo who have joined government paramilitary units and sided against their fellow Manobo, will have their own perspectives on the history of this area, I am privileging the all-too-often marginalized voice of indigenous communities that have had to endure militarization. This privileging of the Manobos' perspective leads to the third sense of the partial, i.e., that this paper sides openly with the Manobo (following Farmer 2003, 26), even as it strives to maintain a critical appreciation of their narratives and stances.

This article also seeks to present a phenomenology of contemporary militarization in a hinterland setting in Mindanao. I maintain that despite the long history of militarization and counterinsurgency violence in the Philippines, this material has, with a few exceptions (e.g., Woon 2011; Margold 1999), yet to be fully explored by academics, especially in such fields as the anthropology of war or of violence. This paper thus hopes to help address this gap in Philippine literature. To this end, I initially chose Whitehead's poetics of violence (Whitehead 2004a, 4–5; see also Whitehead 2004b) as the theoretical framework for interpreting my research data, an approach I had found

useful in understanding how the Banwaon, another indigenous group in northern Mindanao, experienced and understood militarization (Gatmaytan 2013; 2018). In brief, Whitehead's framework posits that violence does not occur in a semiotic vacuum, but is performed within a shared cultural context that lends discursive significance, meaning, and content to those acts of violence. I soon discovered, however, that in the case of Han-ayan and its neighboring Manobo villages, there is no shared cultural context between these communities, on one hand, and the Philippine military, on the other, for evaluating the performance of counterinsurgent violence. Where the former invoke a set of rules under which civilians ought not to be targeted by the security state, the latter seems to be operating by another set of rules under which the Manobo are deemed legitimate targets of counterinsurgency operations, their civilian character or identity notwithstanding. This clash of political values is an aspect of the local experience of counterinsurgent violence that perhaps requires further investigation elsewhere.

For this article's theoretical framework, I have turned instead to Tahir's notions of containment zones and filter points (2017, 231 and 233). These allowed me to pay due attention to the spatial dimensions of counterinsurgency as experienced by the Manobo, which I had found quite striking in the field. I have thus shifted my analytical focus from the question of how the Manobo understand state violence, using Whitehead's framework, to analyzing the larger patterns in the threats and violence of counterinsurgency as experienced and articulated by the Manobo. This shift is justified in part because the Manobo themselves have their own ways of understanding the state's violence, which we as scholars ought to acknowledge and critically re-present to our readers. In seeking now to understand the experience of militarization, I deploy the notion of "containment zones," which are "areas of temporal and spatial closure" (Tahir 2017, 231) demarcated by state forces as a region whose allegiance to the state is suspect, and, thus, generally subject to militarization. Within this zone, the biopolitics of the state is such that "the regulation of bodies is not aimed at disciplining citizens but containing the multitude of categories—tribesmen, insurgents, women, and children—and, at the extreme, 'inscribing them . . . within the order of the maximal economy now represented by the massacre'" (Tahir 2017, 233, citing Mbembe). It is thus "an apparatus that organizes spatial experience into one of anxiety, risk, and precarity" (Tahir 2017, 229). These containment zones are delineated by "filter points" that regulate movement in and

out of the area, and where the unequal power relations between the security state and the local populace is reproduced through such techniques as petty annoyances, humiliations, or prolonged wait times (Tahir 2017, 233). Following Tahir, filter points are exemplified in the research area by the roadside checkpoints (locally referred to as "detachments") operated by members of the state's military and/or paramilitary forces. My own interpretation of Tahir's notion of the filter point, however, goes beyond the merely physical or geo-spatial. I argue that filter points cannot be limited to checkpoints, but can also take the form of political and economic isolation, and other measures that similarly demarcate the containment zone, and thus help construct a distinction between a suspect group residing within it and the rest of the population. I do acknowledge that the notion of containment zones and filter points is only one way of examining the spatial dimension of the counterinsurgency measures experienced by the Manobo. There are, of course, other ways of doing so, some of which may be compatible with Tahir's analytical framework, but I have, in any case, privileged her approach here because it clearly resonates with the Manobo experience. Using Tahir's approach, I hope to offer a sense of how the Manobo experience and understand militarization.

During my stay in Han-ayan, I felt that many of my informants had a need or desire to recount their experiences, whether in the course of scheduled interviews or even in casual conversations. This, despite the obvious pain that their tales can sometimes cause them. I recall, in particular, my interview with the daughter of a community leader murdered by paramilitaries, and how her speech—which had been very straightforward up to that point—slowed to an almost incantatory cadence when she began talking about her father's death, as if she was carefully navigating between jagged memories that could so easily reopen still raw wounds. I felt so guilty for asking her to relive her memories that I apologized to her afterward. From my own experience in other similarly militarized communities (see Gatmaytan 2013), I understand such story telling or "sharing-sharing" as an implicit request to record or document their experiences; to "log-book"—as a Higaonon leader I once knew used to say—their history. I believe this drive to share their stories is an agentive response to their situation, one that draws upon their still largely oral traditions and knowledges. More, I also see their stories as gifts in Mauss's sense ([1950] 2002, 6–7). By this, I mean that the sharing of a story here is not a discrete transaction where a thing is transferred from one party to another. Rather, the presentation

of the gift is a gesture that initiates a relationship of continuing, mutual exchange between the giver and the recipient. I sense, however, that my obligation in this relationship is not to reciprocate with a tale of my own, but to pass the stories I have received onward to other audiences or publics. In a political context that involves contests over the framing and significance of events, decisions, and outcomes, stories have a key importance. Like seeds that contain a record of their genetic heritage, stories preserve memories, and perhaps, more crucially, the perspective that framed these memories of people, things, and events. Like seeds, they embody the hope of harvest, in this case, of support for and solidarity with the storyteller. The Manobo are thus broadcasting their tales like sowers in the field, and it seems I have been entrusted with their stories so that I too can broadcast them, in other, further fields. All of which is to say that the telling of stories can have political significance, as an indigenous mode of resistance; one in which we, as scholars who traffic in knowledges and understandings, can participate.

But precisely because stories can have political weight and significance in ongoing struggles or negotiations over rights or claims, the tellers of these tales may be targeted or suppressed by those who have a stake in maintaining and/or dissimulating the current situation. How then are we to reconcile the obligation to share individual Manobos' stories with the ethical duty to ensure their safety by concealing their identities or maintaining a pragmatic silence? How do we address the tension between the informant's secrecy and anonymity and the scholar's agency through witnessing? My response here is to construct a synthetic, communal story into which I have woven my individual interlocutors' words and tales. The resulting narrative is a fiction in the very specific sense that I myself crafted or authored this narrative (following Clifford 1986, 5–6), even as it contains the truths lived and learned by individual Manobo witnesses.

This brings us to another, more fundamental ethical issue. Leaving aside the question of how to talk about the experiences of the Manobo, there is the matter of whether or not we should even speak of the situation of the Manobo at all. The problem is concisely captured in an adage attributed to the anthropologist Laura Nader, who is reputed to have warned: "Don't study the poor and powerless, because everything you say about them will be used against them" (Farmer 2003, 26). But as I have noted, the Manobo were very vocal about their experiences. Here, there is none of the conditioned "surface silence" that Farmer (2003, 25–26) says characterizes many of the poor, a

silence the anthropologist must break only after carefully assessing the possible consequences. With the Manobo coming forward with their stories, all that is left to me as an anthropologist is to record their "painful eloquence" and report their situation as they see it, to "bear witness" as it were (Farmer 2003, 26, 27) to their experience of and insight into decades of state violence.

CONTEXT: HAN-AYAN AND ITS NEIGHBORS

As noted above, this case study focuses on the Manobo residents of Han-ayan, a *sitio* or *purok* of around thirty households in the hinterlands of Barangay (village) Diatagon in the municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur province. Han-ayan lies between two other sitios: the village of Mike is a much smaller, less compact community, about a three-minute walk up the road from Han-ayan; and the village of Km. 16 (pronounced "KM 16," "16," or "Dieciseis"), which is slightly smaller than Han-ayan, and about a ten-minute walk down the road. The names of these indigenous villages may seem unusual to some readers; they are a legacy of the logging industry, whose jargon has thus been inscribed into the local geography. These three villages are so physically close to each other that visitors often mistakenly assume that they all form a single community. Han-ayan and its two nearest neighbors are only about an hour's drive up a mostly rough mud-and-gravel road that winds into the hills from the market place of Barangay Diatagon. The road itself is another legacy of the logging industry, constructed to facilitate timber extraction during the postwar period.

In this article, my remarks on Han-ayan and its residents can be applied as well to the people of Km. 16 and Mike. In fact, in this study, I would go so far as to denote the community of Han-ayan as representative of the larger Manobo population of this hinterland area. Having said that, I should add that the Manobo people of Surigao del Sur are certainly not a politically undifferentiated mass who all share the same political perspective. In fact, there are Manobo who are members of the Magahat-Bagani group, a paramilitary organization organized, armed, and salaried by the Philippine military, and has conducted counterinsurgency actions against Manobo villages (see Cupin 2016). Still, it is safe to say that the greater majority of the Manobo in this hinterland area find themselves at the receiving end of the counterinsurgency efforts of the government's military and paramilitary forces, as will be discussed below.

Han-ayan is one of the twenty-odd Manobo communities in what is called the Andap Valley Complex, a large, hilly area covered in heavy brush and forest stands that runs roughly parallel to the central section of Surigao del Sur's narrow coastline. According to the Manobo themselves, their ancestors migrated into this area from neighboring Agusan del Sur province many years before the Second World War, in the process displacing the Mamanwa settlements originally occupying these hills. Local respondents say that the name *Han-ayan* comes from *han-ay*, meaning "line" or "in a line." According to one account, a series of serious disputes were once settled here, one after another, as if in a line. Another version holds that these disputes were resolved at or along a nearby creek, which featured a line of stone steps down which its waters flowed. Both accounts revolve around the resolution of conflict and the resulting achievement of peace, which is quite ironic, given this area's contemporary history.

Originally, the Manobo were subsistence *kaingin* (swidden) farmers (Garvan 1931, 73). Today, most of the Manobo of Han-ayan and the surrounding area rely on the planting and harvesting of abaca (*Musa textilis*) for fiber and of falcatta (*Albizia falcattaria*) trees for softwood. These products are sold to buyers in Diatagon for money with which to pay for needed or wanted goods and services. At the same time, most families continue to cultivate corn, root crops, bananas, and other farm products in swidden clearings for consumption and occasional sale. Rice cultivation is still practiced, but it no longer has the economic centrality it must once have enjoyed. The Manobo villages in these hills thus function as the economic hinterland to the metropolis represented by Diatagon—and by extension, the township of Lianga—supplying the lowland with agricultural commodities for consumption or resale. To note, the five Manobo villages I managed to visit in this area appear prosperous compared to so many other indigenous communities I have visited. Most of the houses are substantial in size and are of sturdy materials, a number of them even sporting satellite dishes. Many families own motorcycles, and there is relatively lively traffic along the road to Diatagon, with logs or bundles of fiber carried on motorcycles down to the market on the coast, and groceries or merchandise brought up into the hills. While Han-ayan is not connected to Mindanao's energy grid, neighbors work together to form small, generator-based electrical networks to provide local power. A few families have already begun investing in solar panels.

After the Second World War, this area became part of the logging concession area awarded by the Philippine government to Lianga Bay Logging Co., which built the network of roads still used in the hills to this day. At the height of its operations, this logging firm made Diatagon's center, where the company had its offices, markedly more prosperous than Lianga, the municipality to which it belonged. Even today, Diatagon looks like a full-fledged municipality rather than a mere barangay of Lianga. The Manobo profited little from these logging operations, however. The company was averse to hiring Manobo as workers, preferring to hire instead Bisaya or Surigaonon laborers from the coast, or migrants from elsewhere in the country. Indeed, there was a time when the company engaged police or constabulary units to search for and arrest Manobos practicing kaingin or swidden farming in the area, which the firm reportedly saw as destructive or wasteful of commercially valuable timber.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the outlawed New People's Army (NPA) was able to establish a presence in this area during the increasingly turbulent 1970s and 1980s as it waged its protracted guerrilla war against the Marcos dictatorship and the succeeding administrations (Sales 1992, 215–18). Catholic priest-turned-Communist rebel Frank Navarro is well-remembered by many of the older community leaders, particularly for convening a week-long meeting with all the Manobo datus in 1985, during which he spoke to them of "human rights." That was, according to one of the surviving *datu* (headman) who attended that meeting, the first time they ever heard of their individual and collective rights. Father Navarro and the NPA are also credited by a number of respondents with successfully blocking the entry of Benguet Corp., which was then interested in exploring the mineral potential of the area, thus raising fears of displacement among the Manobo. The NPA continues to maintain a presence in the more remote parts of the Andap Valley area even today. The latest available *Provincial Development and Physical Framework Plan* of Surigao del Sur province acknowledges that the NPA "remains to be a major threat," leading to "the unstable peace and order situation in some parts of the province" (Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 163). It cannot be denied that the Manobo in this area have had encounters with the NPA over the past decades, and that the latter have contributed to the development of the Manobo, particularly by making them aware of their internationally recognized rights to self-determination and territory, and encouraging them to organize and realize these rights

collectively. It would be simplistic, even lazy, however, to simply equate the Manobo with the NPA. A distinction can and should be drawn between the armed and insurgent NPA opposed to the state, on one hand, and the unarmed, civilian Manobo communities who actively participate in the regional economy and in local and national politics, on the other.

The Philippine state responded to the NPA presence with the violence of militarization. This violence has been near continuous since the 1970s or 1980s, and often resulted in the Manobos' displacement from their homes and farms. In the beginning, the Manobo would flee individually or in families into the surrounding forests during such times of danger. Later, however, they began to evacuate in larger groups down to the lowlands, where they encountered the Catholic Diocese of Tandag. Bishop Ireneo Amantillo of that diocese is widely recognized as inspiring the Manobo to organize themselves (see Ambray 2019, 94), eventually leading to their establishment of the Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod (Persevering Struggle for the Coming Generations or MAPASU) in May 1996. Where in the past, the datu functioned as village-level leaders, today the Manobo also recognize elected officials of MAPASU as well as local government officials as community leaders. Initially, there were tensions between the more traditionalist elders and the more progressive MAPASU officials (for example, over the question of *boya* or arranged marriages, especially those involving adolescent girls), but these issues were eventually worked out. For most Manobo in the Andap Valley Complex, the MAPASU continues to be the umbrella intervillage association that oversees their rights and welfare. It articulates its own interpretation of the indigenous right to self-determination, which is closely bound with the idea of protecting the Manobos' territorial claim over the land and resources of the Andap Valley area. On that basis, MAPASU opposes all mining operations in this area. This decision—ascribed by many respondents to their elders (*mga tigulang*)—was based on the organization's stated objective of ensuring that the descendants of today's Manobo will also be able to benefit from their ancestral lands and resources, as reflected in the organization's very name. A common metaphor used to explain this decision draws upon bodily imagery: swidden farming may necessitate the felling and firing of trees, but like one's hair, these will regrow in time. Mining, on the other hand, was like pulling out one's organs, which do not regrow themselves and thus leads to death. Thus, while indigenous swidden agriculture is perfectly acceptable to the

Manobo, mining ought to be opposed, as it would lead to the destruction of the very environment their people rely on for their survival, and thus denying succeeding generations their opportunity for development. A few informants even added that their opposition to mining also benefits the lowland communities, who would otherwise be adversely affected by pollution and the loss or degradation of water resources.

The Diocese of Tandag, recognizing other needs and aspirations of the Manobo, also organized the Tribal Filipino Program for Surigao del Sur (TRIFPSS). This led to the establishment of a network of elementary-level schools among the Manobo villages in this area. Years later, the problem of ensuring the continuing education of the TRIFPSS's elementary school graduates came up, so Manobo leaders worked with Catholic Church workers toward the establishment of a local secondary school for aspiring students. Their efforts bore fruit in 2004 with the founding of the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV) in Han-ayan village. It should be noted, however, that for all the impact that the Catholic Diocese of Tandag has had on the lives of the Manobo, most of them remain unconverted to Christianity, and continue to rely on their *baylan* and other traditional ritualists for their spiritual needs. One Manobo leader even earned the ire of some Diocesan priests when he vehemently and successfully opposed the establishment of a Catholic chapel in one Manobo village.

VIOLENCE IN HAN-AYAN: A PARTIAL HISTORY

The various versions of Han-ayan's history—and of particular episodes within that history—that I encountered during my fieldwork naturally varied from person to person. In general, however, they all recounted a long, emotionally demanding series of human rights violations or abuses at the hands of the Philippine state's military and/or paramilitary forces, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s through to the present (cf. Sales 1992; Alamon 2017). This body of shared experiences and memories of suffering and loss is so vast that some informants confessed that, having endured so many abuses over the years and having undertaken so many evacuations in response, the details of the various incidents sometimes become mixed up in their minds. Fortunately, I am not interested in documenting the entirety of the Manobos' various experiences here. As I explained above, I will focus

on particular sets of incidents that have great significance for my respondents. I found two such sets of incidents from among the mass of stories I collected during my fieldwork.

The first set I recount here has greater resonance for the older members of the community who witnessed the events. These respondents saw the following incidents as marking a perceived shift in the government's attitude toward the Manobo, as will be discussed later in this case study.

The first set of incidents all occurred in May 2005, when there were already ongoing clashes between units of the Philippine military and the NPA in the forests further up in the hills from Han-ayan. The residents of the villages of Mike and Han-ayan became particularly alarmed when they heard the sound of near-continuous gunfire drawing closer and closer to their villages. They soon learned that a column of soldiers from the 58th Infantry Battalion was walking down the road toward them, all the while shooting into the surrounding trees and vegetation. On reaching Mike and Han-ayan, they began shooting at peoples' houses and water boxes, abaca-stripping machines and abaca fibers hung up to dry, and even shot dead some of the residents' dogs they encountered. Some villagers fled into the surrounding brush, but most were forced down the road, ending up huddled in front of the TRIFPSS grade school in Han-ayan. When the soldiers reached the village, they set up a perimeter around it, surrounding the assembled residents. The soldiers then accused three local men of being NPA supporters, and in full view of the villagers, proceeded to torture them. One man had a plastic bag pulled over his head and tied around his neck before finally being released. The two other men—who were brothers—were beaten by the soldiers, who clubbed them repeatedly with their rifles. Seeing how the wall of the community cooperative directly behind the brothers was repainted with their spattered blood, one witness recalls thinking that the two men could not possibly survive their ordeal. Yet they did, and the soldiers concluded the torture by binding their wrists and detaining them. The troops stayed until a military helicopter landed at Han-ayan the next day to pick up the bodies of soldiers killed in their encounter with the NPA, after which they left the village, bringing the battered brothers with them. The two were later "redeemed" (*nabawi*) by community leaders.

The second set of incidents was the most often and most clearly recalled by both old and young informants. This may be due to its relative proximity in time to the present, as to the very striking, indeed

harrowing nature of the events themselves. I refer here to the September 2015 murder of three men—two community leaders and the executive director of the ALCADEV school—by paramilitaries backed by soldiers of the Philippine Army.

In the early morning of September 1, 2015, the residents of Han-ayan were roused from sleep by armed soldiers from the 75th Infantry Battalion, who ordered them to assemble at the *basketbolan* (basketball court) of Km. 16. On the short trek to that village, the people saw soldiers stationed at intervals along the road. Upon arrival, they found that the people of Km. 16 were also gathering at the basketbolan. This was a section of the gravel road from the lowlands that widened out before branching in two directions: left into the hills and right to Han-ayan. A house-cum-*sari-sari* (sundry) store stands between these two branches, and there are high earthen banks on both sides of this junction area. Soldiers positioned themselves along the top of these banks. Dionel Campos, then the chair of MAPASU, and Belen Itallo, a senior teacher of ALCADEV, were made to sit on a bench fronting the sari-sari store, facing the residents assembled on the road. At around 5:00 a.m., two masked men stood beside Campos in front of the villagers, removed their masks, and introduced themselves as members of the Magahat-Bagani paramilitary group. They rebuked the villagers for their opposition to mining. At some prearranged signal, the soldiers on the earthen banks abutting the basketbolan fired extended bursts from their assault rifles over the heads of the villagers. Meanwhile, one of the paramilitaries beside Campos forced him down onto the ground and shot him in the head with an assault rifle. Datu Juvello Sinzo, a community leader who was among the assembled villagers, fled down the road but was shot by another paramilitary. He was still alive when the shooter approached his prone body and broke his limbs against the concrete sides of a water box Sinzo had fallen against. The paramilitaries warned people not to move for two hours, then left with the soldiers. Shocked villagers laid the dying Sinzo on a bench beside Campos's body, where he shortly expired. Later that morning, students found the bound body of ALCADEV Executive Director Emerito Samarca, dead from stab wounds and a slashed throat in his room at the school, where he had last been seen in the custody of other paramilitaries. Fearing further violence, Han-ayan and other Manobo communities evacuated, ending up in a refugee camp within the sports stadium of Tandag, the capital of Surigao del Sur

province. It would be one year and two days before they felt it was safe to return to their homes.

Some readers may recall this second event, which drew considerable media coverage and public outrage (see, for example, Carvajal 2015; La Viña 2015; *MindaNews* 2015), giving impetus to the launching of the wide-reaching Stop Lumad Killings campaign later in 2015. To note, President Duterte is on record as supporting the Stop Lumad Killings campaign during this time (Manlupig 2015). While reviewing my data, I was struck by how different witnesses fixed on different details in their respective accounts: how still-hot spent cartridges fell from the soldiers' guns and got tangled in some girls' hair; how one masked paramilitary turned away, perhaps unable to stomach the violence; how Dionel Campos's killer repeatedly pressed one foot down on his prone body, "like a butcher standing over a [slaughtered] goat"; or how someone shouted, "*Tama na, sir! Tama na!*" (Enough, sir! Enough!) throughout the shooting. Such details mark the witnesses' individual experience, and point to the lingering trauma of the event. One respondent said of her fellow villagers, "they have not yet moved on"' (*di pa sila naka-move on*). Unfortunately for the affected Manobo, the paramilitary perpetrators—who were easily identified because they introduced themselves, or were relatives of some of the many Manobo witnesses—remain at large to this day, even though there are numerous reported sightings of these men in or near military camps in Diatagon.

The Broken Promise of Change

The Manobo of Han-ayan and the rest of Andap Valley were still living as refugees in Tandag when the 2016 national elections drew near. The then-dominant Liberal Party, to which outgoing President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III belonged, fielded Manuel A. Roxas as its candidate for the presidency. Given the fact that the grim events of 2015 occurred during the term of a president from the Liberal Party who subsequently and signally failed to bring the identified perpetrators to justice, Roxas's bid found little support among the Manobo. The final nail on the coffin of his ambitions, at least as far as the Manobo were concerned, was when he perhaps unthinkingly visited the evacuation site in Tandag with an armed escort of soldiers, the sight of which sent the Manobo children hiding in terror and sent at least one elder trembling with fear.

In contrast, the candidacy of then Davao City Mayor Duterte enjoyed popular support among the displaced Manobo. Respondents cited the fact that Duterte was from Mindanao and would thus presumably understand the Manobos' plight; that he promised to pursue peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA; and that he offered a political platform that some interpreted as pro-environment and antimining, among other things, to explain his popularity among the Manobo. In particular, however, Duterte's campaign promise that "change is coming" clearly resonated with a people who had endured decades of government neglect and violence, and who rather justifiably felt that they had been denied justice in the matter of the terrible events of 2015, among other adverse experiences. Thus, when asked for whom they had voted for in the 2016 elections, almost all my informants prefaced their answer with "*Siyempre*" (Of course)—i.e., "*Siyempre, si Duterte*"—reflecting the sense that for them, no other candidate was even worth considering at that time. A relative of the slain Dionel Campos was even certain that the latter would have voted for Duterte as well had he lived to vote. Respondents estimate that Duterte won 70 percent of the Manobo vote, with Senator Grace Poe coming in a distant second. Many informants recalled being overjoyed by the news of Duterte's electoral victory and his subsequent inauguration as the country's 16th president in June 2016. One man stated that when Duterte won, he felt that the Philippines finally had "a president of the poor" (*presidente sa kabus*), and that "all our problems have been answered" (*tubag na tanan sa atong mga prublema*).

On February 24, 2017, however, President Duterte threatened to bomb Lumad or tribal schools such as those run by ALCADEV and TRIFPSS, claiming that these schools were operating illegally, without government permits, and were merely training grounds for the NPA (Lingao 2017; see also Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 166). Given the high value the Manobo accord to education (Trinidad 2012), this news troubled many villagers. The outbreak of the so-called Marawi Siege on May 23 of that same year resulted in the declaration of martial law across all of Mindanao (Proclamation no. 216, s. 2017). When asked, many of my respondents said they initially accepted the idea of martial law. They believed that a state of martial law would help the state's military forces address serious law-and-order problems across Mindanao, particularly terrorist organizations like the Maute Group then fighting government forces in the streets of Marawi City, the

trafficking of illegal drugs, and cases of violent criminality. On October 15, 2017, the people of Han-ayan were terrified by their first experience of a drone overflight. Many residents thought that the audible but invisible unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that hovered over the community was there to deliver on Duterte's promise to bomb the ALCADEV school. This triggered another evacuation, though only down to the village of Km. 9. While it was later learned that the drones used by the Philippine military were designed only for surveillance and had no offensive capabilities (see Parameswaran 2017), they still cause anxiety whenever they fly over Manobo communities, as will be discussed below. On February 1, 2018, President Duterte announced his intention of "choosing investors" who will develop areas belonging to indigenous groups in Mindanao, which specifically included the Manobo communities of the Andap Valley Complex (Arguillas 2018). Again, this troubled the Manobo, many of whom feared that Duterte might hand over control of the area to a mining company, in spite of the MAPASU's stated opposition to mining operations within their territory. These developments steadily eroded the Manobos' initial faith and trust in Duterte.

On July 16, 2018, the Manobo of Han-ayan joined their neighbors in evacuating to the lowlands once more. This was in response to the presence of government soldiers establishing a series of military checkpoints in the area, beginning at the Manobo village of Simuwao. Witnesses from Simuwao complained that the soldiers behaved so abusively (e.g., raucous and inconsiderate behavior, asking Manobo women where they can find the prostitutes in the village, sighting their assault rifles on villagers, interrogating people walking to or from their farms) that they could no longer endure (*di' na namo kaya*) the troops' disruptive presence. While soldiers did not similarly beset Han-ayan and other Manobo communities then, the Manobo of Han-ayan joined Simuwao in evacuating from the area. This time, however, the military and police, local government officials, and even the municipal social welfare personnel all seemed to be working together against them, though all they wanted was to avoid possible violence by fleeing the area. First, they were barred from entering the Diatagon public gymnasium where they had planned to set up camp (see also Saludes 2018). When they finally persuaded barangay officials to allow them entry, they found that water and electricity to the gymnasium had been cut off (Saludes 2018). The military set a perimeter around the gymnasium, and the municipal social welfare office monitored and

restricted the entry of relief supplies to the Manobo sheltering within. The military also staged a "rally" at the gymnasium entrance, where MAPASU was denounced over the public address system as an NPA front by such speakers as Marcos Bocales, leader of the Magahat-Bagani paramilitary group responsible for the murders of 2015. On July 30, 2018 the Manobo decided to escape the hostile conditions in Diatagon and walk north along the highway to Tandag, the provincial capital. However, soldiers mounted on military vehicles repeatedly blocked their way. The exhausted evacuees eventually found shelter at the public gymnasium of Barangay Buhisan in neighboring San Agustin town. Negotiations between the MAPASU and its supporters and the military later resulted in the latter pulling out of Simuwao. Through all this, the military and the municipal social welfare office questioned the reason for the evacuation, repeatedly saying that there were no military operations then to warrant an evacuation (Mordeno 2018a).

For many Manobo, the July 2018 evacuation crystallized the realization that the MAPASU—and by extension, the Manobo people of the Andap Valley themselves—were among the terrorists and criminals that the "president of the poor" planned to seek out and destroy through his declaration of martial law. It is safe to say that almost all the Manobo in this area who had voted for Duterte now regret doing so. As one informant put it, "He has taken off his mask; he introduced himself as a dove, but it turns out he is an eagle" (*Gikuha na man niya ang iyang maskara; nagpaila siya nga siwit, unya agila diay*).

Life Under Duterte's Martial Law

My initial impression of Han-ayan was of a vibrant community, with cheerful and hardworking residents socializing and tending their homes and farms. I discovered, however, that this sense of normalcy was very fragile. In the early morning of October 18, 2018, the sound of a drone was heard once more, circling over the village for more than two hours. The next day, I found that the villagers had turned wary and anxious overnight; they ventured out less and kept their children close; and the entire community was markedly quieter. One of the ALCADEV staff commented, "Now there is fear, now there is anger [among the people]" (*Naa na'y kahadlok, naa na'y kasuko*). Those I approached readily confessed that they were worried because the community has observed that military operations on the ground soon followed the appearance of a drone in the sky.

This underscores the profound uncertainty of community life under Duterte's martial law, where the possibility of violence at the hands of government forces and the painful necessity of again abandoning their homes and farms haunt every moment. One Manobo stated, "We cannot say we won't have to evacuate again, we cannot say we won't be attacked by the military again" (*Di' ta kaingon nga dili na ta makabakwit, di' ta kaingon nga dili na ta atakehon sa military*). Indeed, many villagers now live "in anticipation of violence" (following Jeganathan 2000, 112–13): Some families were reportedly searching for a second-hand motorcycle for use in the next evacuation. One mother has an evacuation kit—a plastic pail with a lid that can be used as a basin, containing a small metal pot, blankets, soap, and other necessities—that she can easily snatch up and away when necessary. In much the same spirit, another woman said that since the events of 2015, she now makes it a point to store her family's clothes in a bag rather on the shelves in her house. Finally, some villages have developed their own procedures for evacuation, and their residents have internalized their individual roles within those procedures.

One leader said that continuing militarization, including the anxiety and insecurity it engenders, was their "biggest, heaviest problem [because] it dislocates our livelihood" (*pinakadagko, pinakabug-at nga prublema, [kay] madislokar ang among panginabuhi*). Many Manobo complained that militarization and the frequent need to evacuate makes farming difficult or problematic. As one young farmer said, "*Igo lang ka makatanom, bakwit na sad; kapuy!*" (You have only just planted [crops], [but you have to] evacuate once again; [it's] exhausting!) During evacuations, farms are left untended, which all too often leads to poor harvests and low incomes. One man said that after every evacuation forced upon them by militarization, their livelihoods were "*back to zero, dili sa uno*" (back to zero, not back to [square] one).

This sense of precariousness is heightened by the way the military seems to be isolating the communities within the Andap Valley Complex. In Tahir's terms, the military is demarcating this area as a containment zone. I find this development rather chilling, as this spatial "othering" process has historically been a preparatory step for the application of violence (Hinton 2004, 159–60). This process of demarcation has several aspects, which we will briefly address in turn. I should also add that while most of the measures described below have been used, off and on, by the military in counterinsurgency operations since at least the 1980s, the intensity and coordination of their

implementation is reportedly more marked under Duterte's martial law.

Politically, there is a widespread perception that the Manobo communities are being cut off from the government and from public services. One leader noted that since around 2014, no local government officials or politicians have visited the area. The one exception he cited was a vocal *konsehal* (municipal councillor) who genuinely appreciates the Manobos' contributions to Diatagon's local economy. Similarly, the barangay captain of Diatagon had initially refused to allow the evacuees to use the public gymnasium during the July 2018 evacuation, explaining that under martial law, the military made the decisions and he was merely following their lead (Mordeno 2018a). One respondent complained that in the face of the many abuses continually endured by the Manobo, local government officials were "*hilom lang, hadlok kay martial law*" (just [keeping] silent, afraid because of martial law). Staff members of ALCADEV remarked that where once their relations with the local Department of Education offices were cordial, now the latter seem wary of meeting with them. Similarly, other line agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, have, according to my respondents, become markedly less accommodating toward the Manobo of the Andap Valley area. For my part, I did come across a group of officials from the government's Commission on Human Rights (CHR) while on my way up to Han-ayan, but given the CHR's virtual pariah status within the Duterte administration, they would be the exception that proves the rule. When questioned, the now-unapproachable civil servants explained that they had been instructed by the military to refuse assistance to the Manobo. They said, "We cannot do anything [about this], because it is martial law now" (W*ala mi mahimo, kay martial law karon*), as if the declaration of martial law granted the military extraordinary control over the provision of public services. At the same time, military officers and soldiers were quoted by respondents as saying that under martial law, "*Kami ang mahukmanon*" (We [have the power to] decide [things]) and "*Amo ang balaod*' (The law is ours), which seems to suggest that the military is claiming a greater voice in the political or administrative control of the area. Some of my more elderly interlocutors noted that this was one difference between martial law in the 1970s and today: in the past, the Manobo only had to contend with the military. Now, they confront not only the military, but also the unapproachability, if not hostility, of local governments and line agencies, as if the entire

bureaucracy of public service itself has been "weaponized" against them. This explains the sense of surprise or bafflement that some respondents felt over the government's response to their evacuation in July 2018. It represents a twist on the current "whole of nation approach" to counterinsurgency, under which all government agencies were supposed to provide programs and services to local communities (Sec. 1, Exec. Order no. 70, s. 2018) and thus win them from their suspected support of insurgent forces. Instead, what the Manobo experienced was a policy where all government agencies were denying them services, and even respect.

There have been similar attempts by the military to sever the Manobo communities' links to the wider economy. The most common form this effort takes is what the Manobo call "food blockades" where soldiers at checkpoints block, delay, or generally harass people transporting sacks of rice and other foodstuffs up into the hinterlands. Some of my informants spoke of snide insinuations by soldiers at the checkpoints that the rice is intended for the NPA; of attempts to confiscate all or part of their cargo ("*Apil diay sa martial law ang bugas?*" or "Does martial law apply to rice as well?" complained one frustrated Manobo); and of sometimes being made to wait for hours before being allowed to proceed onward. As Tahir noted (2017, 233), checkpoints are sites where the power differential between the military—and by extension, the state—and the Manobo is reproduced. This is apparent not only in how soldiers at checkpoints seek to control the flow of foodstuffs into the area, but also document and thus harass residents passing through. Thus, there are accounts of soldiers using mobile phone cameras to photograph Manobo residents as they negotiated their passage through local checkpoints. On one hand, this practice suggests to the Manobo that they are suspect for some reason and that the state is building a dossier on them. On the other hand, the Manobo have to live with the fact that their photographic images, taken with, at best, vitiated consent, may be used, framed, or manipulated as the military desires or chooses. Such measures are generally implemented intermittently, even capriciously, except when there are military operations, when they are more strictly enforced and, thus, more closely resemble Tahir's notion of a filter point. In much the same vein, there was also at least one attempt by the military to prohibit the use of the *katig* (lit., outriggers), the long wooden platforms mounted along both sides of a motorcycle to enable its driver to transport a larger load of cargo. Again, the apparent aim here was to restrict the amount of rice

or other foodstuffs going up into the Andap Valley area. A newer method of effecting economic isolation takes the form of pressure applied on shop owners in Diatagon to avoid further transactions with the Manobo. This practice was particularly apparent during the July 2018 evacuation, when the local police would inspect the purchases made by the Manobo evacuees, seeking the sales receipts to determine the store from which an evacuee made her/his purchases, and then pressuring the thus-identified store owners to stop selling merchandise to the Manobo. A Manobo teacher thus said that she is now afraid to make market purchases in Diatagon, because if she happens to mention that she works with ALCADEV, she might be arrested immediately (*Mahadlok ko'g palit, kay kon maka-ingon ko'g taga-*ALCADEV *ako, basin posasan ako dayon*).

Finally, there also seems to be an attempt to isolate the Manobo socially, i.e., to cut them off from their wider network of support beyond the communities. On the one hand, this takes the form of near-constant propaganda efforts that paint the MAPASU and its officials as fronts of the outlawed CPP and NPA, apparently in order to erode outside support for the Manobo and their organization. One medium for this propaganda is the radio program broadcast on Sure FM-Tandag by the military in this region, which frequently attacks the MAPASU and ALCADEV. Another is the setting up of placards or posters along the coastal highway that, among other things, purport to bewail how the innocent Manobo are being duped by the NPA, or which virtually equate the MAPASU with the NPA. The military has also weaponized judicial processes by filing false criminal charges for murder or kidnapping, for example, against MAPASU leaders. Many informants noted how anyone who speaks out against the abuses suffered by the Manobo almost always ended up having such charges filed against them. I had occasion to examine the documents of one such case, where a witness who identified himself as a community member described how he and his fellow villagers were allegedly threatened by MAPASU officials into joining an evacuation. The accused officials commented that they personally know each and every member of their communities, and that the supposed witness is not one of them, underscoring how the latter was fictitious and the charges false. Legally speaking, such cases are not particularly complicated, but it is still difficult for the accused Manobo to deal with them given the work and expenses entailed, the possibility that the military will simply refile the same or additional false charges, and the risk of harassment or detention that anyone who

wishes to contest the charges in court faces. One effect of this measure has been to drive some of the accused leaders into hiding, to the point that they no longer come down from the hinterlands to visit Diatagon or other places. Indeed, during the more recent evacuations, these leaders chose to stay behind and hide in the surrounding forests rather than risk being recognized while in the lowlands and then be arrested or worse. Where no criminal charges have been filed, government troops have been reported to resort to harassment of community leaders, repeatedly interrogating them or pressuring them to "surrender" even though they are unarmed civilians residing in settled villages. In one case, soldiers even prohibited a leader from owning or possessing a mobile phone. The result of such measures is that local leaders can no longer access or cultivate his/her personal network of contacts beyond his/her family and village.

I interpret such measures as variant forms of Tahir's filter points, realized not at the geophysical margins marked by the presence of a checkpoint, but (following Das and Poole 2004, 8–10) at the political, economic, and social margins of the Philippine security state, instantiated in or through government services, grocery transactions, and criminal charges, among other possibilities. I argue that the cumulative impact of these measures is the gradual but contested "social disarticulation" (see Palatino 2019, this issue) of Han-ayan and other Manobo communities from the rest of Philippine society. Thus, one elder remarked, "We have no place within the state" (*Wa' mi luna diha sa estado*). This policy of isolation is underlined somewhat by a more recent declaration by President Duterte to the effect that he will move various indigenous communities in Mindanao into "hamlets," to keep them beyond the reach of the NPA and thus ensure these communities' loyalty to himself (Ranada 2018). Following Tahir, the areas thus defined and isolated form a containment zone whose residents are treated as suspect, and thus subject to threatened or actual violence (Tahir 2017, 229, 231) by the military. Which is to say, the Manobo are treated by the military—and by extension, by the state itself—differently from the rest of the local or indeed national population. This is underscored by the widespread observation that the Philippine military's soldiers behave differently "*sa* highway" (on the highway, i.e., in the coastal lowlands through which the provincial highway runs) as opposed to "*sa bukid*" (in the hills, i.e., among the hinterland Manobo communities). Their conduct is described as "OK" or even "*maayo*" (well-mannered) when they are in the lowlands, but "*mabangis*" (ferocious)

when they are in or around the hill-villages. "*Bangis*" and "*brutal*" are the most common descriptions of soldiers' behavior I encountered among the Manobo.

This is not to say that the Manobo are passive victims of the military's machinations. They continue to engage local government officials and line agency bureaucrats, asserting their rights as citizens to access public services. They have also continued to maintain their relations with other indigenous communities, institutions within the Catholic Church, and other civil society groups. They try to use the media available to them to report any human rights violations they experience, dispute the military's framing of local events, and inform the general public of their situation (see ALCADEV Lumad School 2019). Their participation in some of the Manilakbayan activities can be interpreted as attempts to "break out" of the containment zone, to reach out for support and solidarity beyond their territory. They have even rallied around the MAPASU, instead of abandoning it as seems to be the intention behind the 2015 killings (cf. Bob and Nepstad 2007). Indeed, the MAPASU's critical role in managing the Manobos' 2015 evacuation and stay in Tandag seems to have strengthened local support for the organization. As one respondent put it, "If [militarization had occurred] earlier, [when we] had no organization, [I am] one hundred percent [sure] we would be scattered by now" (*Kon sa una pa, na wa' pay organisasyon, one-hundred percent nabungkag gyod [kami]*). Finally, the Manobo exhibit what to me is a resolute, near-heroic perseverance in continuing with their lives and cultivating their farms despite the difficulties of working under such insecure or volatile conditions. The fact remains, however, that they are working against great odds, confronted by a military now backed by "weaponized" institutions of government, and a president who appears hostile toward them.

By way of a postscript to this partial history of the Andap Valley Manobo, I would add that beginning December 31, 2018, and for days thereafter, the military conducted intermittent aerial bombing of the areas around the Manobo villages of Decoy and Panukmoan, prompting another evacuation (ALCADEV Lumad School 2019). Even as people were still reeling from this event, soldiers from the 401st Brigade of the Philippine Army patrolling the uplands of Barangay Buhisan, San Agustin, last January 24, 2019, inexplicably fired upon four Manobo farmers carrying harvested fiber from their abaca farms. The farmers fled but two of them, Emel Tejero and Randel Gallego, both of Han-

ayan village, were shot and killed. The military brought their bodies to the village of Neptune, where they had a detachment. The slain men were described by the military as NPA rebels killed in an armed encounter, a claim disputed by the Manobo (ALCADEV Lumad School 2019). These are the first deaths due to militarization suffered by the Manobo during Duterte's tenure as president, underscoring the continuity of patterns of violence across decades and across political administrations. As of this writing, no one has been held to account for these two killings. Finally, there are reliable reports of continuing or intermittent counterinsurgency operations in the area (ALCADEV Lumad School 2019), which unfortunately have not been more widely reported in the media.

STATE VIOLENCE: THEME AND VARIATIONS

One Manobo woman declared that "the symbol of martial law here is [the military's] deployment of drones" (*ang hulagway sa martial law diri kining pagpalupad nila og drone*). This statement captures what, for the Manobo, is the most salient characteristic of life under Duterte's martial law: it is not just the continuing, virtually constant threat or reality of militarization, which, after all, is not peculiar to the Duterte administration. As we have seen from the history of Han-ayan outlined above, two of the most resonant events in the local history of militarization occurred in 2005 (during the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration) and 2015 (during the Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III administration).

Rather, it is the community's perception that they—Manobo residents of civilian communities—are actively being targeted by the state's counterinsurgency forces and programs. My informants do say that their becoming targets of the military is not particular to the Duterte administration. Elders saw the incidents of 2005 as significant because, for them, it served to mark a shift in the way the military operated. Until then, Manobo casualties or victims were mostly collateral damage resulting from the conflict between the Philippine military and the insurgent NPA. Thereafter, the military began to directly target Manobo communities and their residents, even as it continued its operations against the NPA. The even grimmer events of 2015 underlined how the MAPASU, the Manobos' organization, is now also a target of the military and its paramilitary minions. This sense

of being targeted by the military—and by extension, the Philippine security state—is captured by the image of the drone.

At one level, the drone very clearly symbolizes the hostile, surveilling eye of the military, directed at the Manobo and their villages. There is more, however. Because each appearance of the UAV is, from bitter experience, linked to subsequent military ground operations, the drone is not merely an eye or lens employed in surveillance, but is also a virtual gun sight used to aim or direct the violence of militarization at Manobo villages (compare Tahir 2017, 221). This is why, even though the people of Han-ayan have absolutely nothing to hide from the drone, its association with military operations still causes widespread anxiety. There is the sense that they are not only being observed or looked at, but that they are being aimed at. For the Manobo then, to live under Duterte's martial law is to live under the metaphorical gun sight that is the drone. It does not matter then that the drone is "merely" a surveillance UAV. The fact that it presages and directs the violence of the state means it can still cause the anxiety, if not terror, associated with the use of armed drones elsewhere (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic [Stanford Law School] and Global Justice Clinic [NYU School of Law] 2012, 55 et seq.; Rohde 2012; Sluka 2013, 186; Hayes 2019, 107). Here, I would flag the military use of UAVs for further research and analysis, perhaps as part of the emergent "anthropology of drones" (cf. Gusterson 2014).

As this discussion suggests, the Manobo of the Andap Valley area understand the violence of counterinsurgency as a direct attack against them. Despite their clear civilian identity, they see themselves as treated the same way as the armed and insurgent NPA. As one Manobo commented, "*Apil naman mi nga gi-atake sa militar*" (We are now included [as targets] attacked by the military). These, then, are unarmed civilians—noninsurgents—who are targeted for counterinsurgent violence. This is a point that some of the older respondents, who experienced martial law under Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and 1980s, and under President Duterte today, addressed in their reflections. They concluded that life under Duterte's martial law is worse, claiming that Marcos never directly attacked civilians and their communities. There were certainly abuses against civilians back then, but they said that at that time, there always was a sense that the military was more clearly focused on defeating the NPA, and would distinguish between the latter and the civilian population. To illustrate this point, informants pointed to the military's counterinsurgency doctrine in the 1970s of

separating the "fish," referring to the NPA, from the "waters" they swam in, referring to the people. Recalling how during the evacuation of July 2018 the military was actually trying to prevent them from evacuating—pressuring the local government to deny access to the gymnasium and then repeatedly blocking their way when they tried to trek to Tandag—one informant saw this as reflective of how the military now simplistically lumped the Manobo and the NPA together. To restate that in Maoist terms, it now seems that the water would no longer be allowed to separate or distinguish themselves from the fish, because they were now all fish in the eyes of the military.

Unsurprisingly, the presence of the military is often associated by my informants with a sense of alarm or fear ("*Basta na'y milit[ary], ma-alarma god ang mga tawo*") (see also Genotiva 2018). Indeed, the mere sight of the footprints of military-issue combat boots in the surrounding forests has been known to spread panic through some villages. This sense of danger or precariousness is the result of their cumulative and continuing negative experience of militarization. As one respondent said, their anxiety "springs from their lived experience . . . [borne out] not just once, or twice, or five [times in their lifetime]" (*nagsumikad sa buhi nga kasinatian . . . dili lang sa isa, o duha, o lima [ka beses]*). The result is that though there may be no actual military operations, even the perceived hostile conduct of government troops can trigger an evacuation, as was the case in Simuwao village, recounted above. There, the military repeatedly insisted there were no military operations to justify an evacuation, missing or eliding the point that their mere presence in a village can heighten the anxieties of life in a militarized zone. This negative view of the military is so widespread in the area that I was initially suspicious of the homogeneity of my informants' responses to the question of what the state's violence means to them. Only later did I realize how the continuous experience of militarization shared by the targeted Manobo villages could produce this homogeneity (following Afflitto 2000, 115).

I found only two variations on this theme of being targeted by the military: the first came from a *baylan* or ritualist, with whom I conversed after he had presided over a ritual performed as part of the celebrations for a child's birthday. Drawing upon indigenous Manobo cosmology, he spoke of life-giving *tagbanwa* or environmental spirits in the forested hills occupied by his people, and the predatory *engkanto* or demons of the seas and coasts associated with the Bisaya or non-Manobo lowlanders. He even recounted a folktale about a stolen wife

and a wedding feast in a spectral dance hall to illustrate the wicked character of the engkanto. He went on to say that living with such spirits on the coasts, it is no wonder that there are so many disasters and so much violence among the non-Manobo, many of whom have taken on some of these spirits' malevolent character. On the other hand, he claimed that the Manobo experience no disasters or violence, save those visited upon them by soldiers from the lowlands, who thus act out the predatory nature of the engkanto. This view suggests a profound, somewhat pessimistic sense of conflict or tension between the uplands and the lowlands, between the Manobo and the Philippine state that dominates the lives of the people of the coasts. The baylan's reaction to the overflight of the drone during my fieldwork was to address his neighbors, saying, "*Pagbantay mo, kay na-a nay dautan sa palibot ninyoha*" (Be vigilant, all of you, for there are now evil [beings] around you). This statement is striking in that it can be understood both as a ritualist's warning against unseen, evil spirits, and as a fatherly warning against the soldiers expected to follow in the wake of the drone. For the baylan perhaps, drawing a distinction between the two was unnecessary.

The second variation drew not on indigenous notions, but on international discourse, specifically on human rights. The elder who spoke of this was one of the leaders who attended the week-long discussion of human rights organized by the rebel priest, Fr. Frank Navarro, in 1985. He described the experience as if it was an epiphany, saying that only then did he realize "*ta-o di-ay mi*" (we were human [after all]), i.e., that the Manobo had equal standing with the Bisaya lowlanders, with the same claim to rights as the latter. For this elderly informant, the history of the Manobo of Andap Valley can be read as a continuing journey to realize their full humanity. Thus, before 1985, they had no clear sense of what their rights were as a people. After 1985, they organized themselves as the MAPASU, to realize their rights and protect their interests as a people. Later, they provided for their children's education through the TRIFPSS and ALCADEV schools, to help sustain their struggle for their rights across the generations. At the same time, they reached out to other indigenous organizations and nongovernment organizations, seeking support and solidarity, and speaking out against abuses they suffered. Unfortunately, the military—especially after it began to directly target the Manobos' civilian communities and the MAPASU—seems to be opposed to this movement. The elder concluded, "*Nagpasabot nga dili mi tawo; wala gi-*

ila ang among pagka-tawo" ([This] means we are not human [in their eyes]; they do not recognize our humanity). In response, the Manobo have no choice but to "continue to assert [their rights], to develop, in order to realize their rights" as human beings (*padayon ang pagbarog, paglambo, aron matinuod ang mga katungod*). Similar to the baylan's viewpoint outlined above, there is here a perceived fundamental opposition between the Manobo, an underprivileged indigenous group seeking to achieve and express their full humanity, and a state seemingly set on denying them such an aspiration.

The Manobo, of course, question why they are apparently being treated as targets of the state's counterinsurgency violence alongside the NPA. One student angrily asked, "Why are the soldiers so intent [on us], when it is obvious [we are] civilians?" (*Nganong initan mi sa sundalo, klaro naman nga sibilyan [mi]?*) In fact, a surprising number of informants said they did not oppose military operations as long as these were directed at the NPA and not at themselves, who are unarmed civilians in settled communities, actively contributing to the regional economy, and interested in elections and in availing of government services. In the words of one leader, "If their intention is [to fight] the NPA, [the soldiers] should go to the forests; they should only pass through the communities [on the way there]. [Instead] they gather in the homes of civilians" (*Kon NPA ang ilang tuyo, didto unta sila sa lasang; molabay lang sila sa komunidad. Na, mopondo naman sila sa balay sa sibilyan.*). In other words, these people are not challenging the state's right to conduct counterinsurgent violence; they question rather the legitimacy of such violence when directed toward them by the military.

State Violence: Notes Toward an Explanation

When I asked why the state, in their view, is hostile toward them, a few of my respondents expressed bewilderment. One elderly woman even speculated that soldiers were drug addicts (*adis-adis*), hence, beyond reason or understanding. Most of my informants, however, asserted that the Manobo are being targeted by the military because there are corporations interested in the mineral wealth beneath the hills of the Andap Valley area (see also Mordeno 2018b). The military, in this view, is acting at the behest of these corporate interests by destroying or intimidating indigenous communities whose opposition to all mining operations in the area is articulated by their organization, MAPASU. As another woman said, the military is hoping to "dismantle

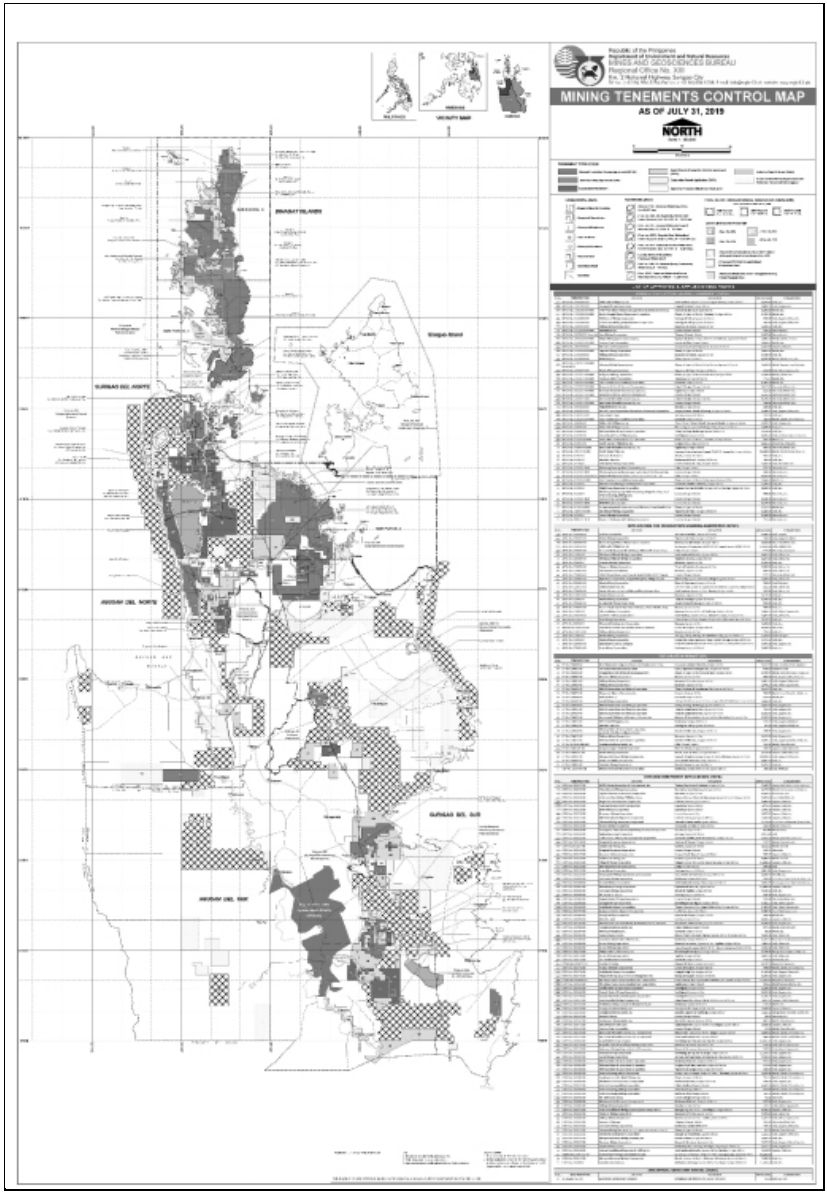

FIGURE 1. Mining Tenements Control Map as of July 31, 2019 showing mining applications (shaded in crosshatched pattern) covering most of the Andap Valley area, the inland area to the north of the northern coast of Lianga Bay, where the words “Surigao del Sur” appear on the map (DENR-MGB, n.d.).

the organization, so mining can enter [the area]" (*bungkagon ang organisasyon, aron makasulod ang mina*). In this connection, we have seen how some of my respondents recalled that just before Dionel Campos and Juvello Sinzo were murdered, the assembled villagers were berated by the paramilitaries for their antimining stance.

Data from the Philippine Government's Mines and Geosciences Bureau seems to confirm that there are corporate mining interests in the area (figure 1), particularly in the coal deposits in the Andap Valley area. The latest available development plan of Surigao del Sur province confirms that it has abundant deposits of manganese, chromite, gold, copper, nickel, iron, and coal, and that there are twelve mining corporations operating in the province, one of which—Philex Gold Philippines Inc.—is conducting exploration work in a 6,207.63-hectare tenement spanning the municipalities of Lianga and Barobo (Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 68). It seems clear that the province is intent on exploiting these resources, especially since its stated development goal is "(t)o transform Surigao del Sur into a progressive province within the framework of an Eco-Tourism, *Mineral*, and Agri-Industrial-based economy . . . ." (Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 8, emphasis supplied). Clearly, this attitude sets the government at odds with MAPASU's stated opposition to mining in the Andap Valley region.

At this point, I draw on the observation that the drive for development is so strong among Southeast Asian states and so pervasive that "individuals who do not embrace it are suspect in terms of their intelligence or their loyalty to the current regime" (Dentan, cited in Duncan 2004, 4). I would go further and argue that neoliberal "development" operates as the economic ideology of the Philippine state, in particular. The mining industry figures in the state's notion of development (Holden and Jacobson 2007, 479), such that opposition to mining can and has been seen as opposition to the state itself. Potential or actual mining areas can, thus, easily become sites of struggle between local populations seeking to protect their livelihoods and mining investors whose claim over the area is backed by the Philippine government's legal and military machinery (Holden et al. 2011, 143–44). In the militarization of the area that may very well follow, the local people can find themselves labeled as communists, especially since they are seen to oppose a global industry representative of capitalism (Holden and Jacobson 2007, 490; Holden et al. 2011, 154–55). In the case of Han-ayan, we have seen how the Manobo

organization MAPASU has been accused of being a front for the communist NPA. By so labeling a population reluctant to submit to the state's economic vision as communists, the government can justify its violence to itself and to others, even as the threat of violence implicit in being tagged as communists weakens the local communities' capacity to resist the entry of both soldiers and miners (Holden and Jacobson 2007, 478).

I need to emphasize that the presence of mining interests is how most of my respondents explained the military's decades-old hostility toward them, and that I have to record and report this fact. Having said that, I also have to say that my interlocutors seemed to be understating the importance of another reason for the military's attitude toward the Manobo of the Andap Valley. Here, I refer to the historical interactions between the Manobo and the NPA, which perhaps allows the military today to simplistically equate one with the other. It is true that there are NPA units in the Andap Valley area. Mere geographic proximity, however, does not justify equating the Manobo with the NPA any more than Christians residing with Muslims in a city can be considered Muslims as well or vice-versa. It is also true that the Manobo and the NPA have a shared attitude toward the right to self-determination. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), of which the NPA is the armed wing, has long supported indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination (see Point 8 of the National Democratic Front's "Ten Point Programme for a National Democratic Revolution," cited in Anti-Slavery Society 1983, 163–64). On the other hand, the Manobo—through the MAPASU—are seeking to exercise their right to self-determination (cf. Ambray 2019). While the Manobo first learned of their right to self-determination through Fr. Frank Navarro and the NPA, this does not necessarily make them members or supporters of the NPA. The Manobo, like other indigenous groups in Mindanao, have a tradition of political autonomy and self-governance (see Garvan 1931), which long predates the coming of the NPA. What the insurgents simply did was to give the Manobo the cultural and political resources to rearticulate their tradition of self-governance in the terms of the internationally recognized discourse of indigenous rights, i.e., as "the right to self-determination." In theory, their interpretation and exercise of their right to self-determination could exclude either or both the Philippine state and the NPA. Today, the Manobo are asserting their right to self-determination by, among other means, protecting their territory from the possible ravages of mining operations.

In this, they are merely drawing on, enhancing, and asserting their tradition of political autonomy over their territory. Unfortunately, the MAPASU's position runs afoul of the state's promining development agenda and of its state-building agenda, which insists on state sovereignty even over areas where indigenous groups have a right to political autonomy, and sees any assertion of such autonomy as a mark of Communism, hence, subversive. This recalls the need to pay greater ethnographic and analytical attention to the political dynamics between indigenous groups with a tradition of autonomy and self-governance and the state (following Gibson 1990, 143).

In sum, it would appear that the Manobo of Han-ayan and their neighbors are beset by the military in part because of their association with the NPA in the Andap Valley region, and because of their opposition to mining operations, which unfortunately reinforces the military's continuing refusal to distinguish between the Manobo and the NPA, between legitimate opposition to mining and sedition, and between self-determination and insurgency. Further study of this issue, perhaps to include the perspectives of military and paramilitary officers and operatives, is indicated.

Conclusion

This case study is based on data drawn from interviews conducted in Han-ayan and nearby villages. I am confident that the information here is representative of the Manobo communities within the Andap Valley area, except for those individuals and families who are actively part of the state's paramilitary forces. The case study cannot and should not be made to represent all other indigenous communities or organizations elsewhere in Mindanao or the Philippines. At best, it reflects the experience of other indigenous groups who are also being targeted for militarization by the state. It has been claimed that the state is intent on a "war on extinction" (cf. Alamon 2017) against Mindanao's indigenous peoples, but I think this is a sweeping generalization. The Philippine state's treatment of indigenous groups varies considerably over space and time, ranging from the long-standing hostility displayed in the case of Han-ayan, to the paternalism of the political patronage system in Davao City (Belar 2017, 61–64), to still other structures of relations. Han-ayan's case is important as a marker of this variety, warning against any oversimplifications, positive or negative, about the state of Philippine indigenous peoples today. More importantly, Han-

ayan's case shows how the Duterte administration now treats communities it deems hostile to its centralizing state-building agenda and/or its promining development policies.

For the Manobo of Han-ayan, the Duterte presidency does not represent a change in the conduct of counterinsurgency from the previous administration. They see it rather in terms of the continuity of previous patterns in the performance of state violence; in particular, the targeting of civilian Manobo communities and individuals, which they trace back to 2005. By 2015, they were also made aware that the MAPASU, their organization, was being targeted by the military as well, and life for organization officials has worsened with the systematic filing of false charges against those of them who speak out in the media. Thus, as they had under previous administrations, the Manobo continue to live lives of profound precariousness and insecurity, constantly anticipating the state's next act of violence, and the next evacuation. Under such unstable, anxious conditions, their pursuit of their livelihoods becomes even more difficult. The military's targeting of civilian Manobo communities and the "weaponization" of government institutions—which respondents say did not occur under Marcos in the 1970s—caused some of my older informants to say that life under martial law in the 1970s was better than it is today. The experience of the Manobo of Han-ayan points to the limits of electoral democracy as a minority people's response to their fraught situation. As a minority group, their collective voice cannot by itself prevail over the will of the majority; and even where "their" candidate wins, that candidate will have to contend with opposing interests, or even—as in this case—turn against them.

When he ran for the presidency, Duterte promised change. Looking back today, some informants reflected that if there has been any change, it has been for the worse. While checkpoints and the filing of criminal charges have been part of the government's counterinsurgency arsenal since the 1970s or 1980s, respondents assert that their use today is more continuous or systematic and more closely coordinated with other means of social disarticulation. On the other hand, some of these measures are novel: it has only been under the Duterte administration that the Manobo encountered the withdrawal of or hostility from the local government and local line agency offices. Similarly, they have only now witnessed military and police efforts to pressure local businesses to cease their dealings with the Manobo. Finally, it is only now that they confront recent developments in the

technologies of surveillance (and harassment), particularly the still-novel UAV and the more ubiquitous mobile phone camera. The implementation of these measures, as of this writing, is facilitated by the continuing state of martial law over Mindanao, which ordinary people seem to understand as vesting the military with extraordinary power and discretion, allowing the latter to more easily intimidate or overwhelm any local opposition. At the same time, it seems to embolden military officers and troops to make extraordinary—though legally tenuous—claims to political or administrative power or control in such places as Barangay Diatagon. Here, I would flag the need to study martial law as understood and performed by ordinary people and law enforcers in actual contexts shot through with relations of power, as opposed to the more abstract study of the history, letter, and spirit of a declaration of martial law.

The cumulative effect of these and other measures is to designate the Andap Valley area as a containment zone, where life is lived in a state of "not-peace-not-war" (Nordstrom, cited in Sluka 2009, 283), characterized by a continuing state of threatened or insinuated violence (following Tahir 2017, 229) that can, at any moment, erupt into actual military or paramilitary violence. Tahir (2017, 231) asserts that this strategy maps the territory as government-held areas beyond which are the containment zones, the suspect areas marked by lawlessness. It is against this imputed lawlessness that the state defines itself as a countervailing agent of culture (Tahir 2017, 234), order (Das and Poole 2004, 5–8), or development (Duncan 2004, 5 and 7), thereby justifying its existence and policies.

The state's seeming need to perform violence against those it sees as agents of disorder (i.e., communist-influenced communities) or of backwardness (e.g., antimining communities) suggests that such violence is intrinsic to the constitution of the contemporary Philippine state. This underscores how current patterns of state violence cannot be limited to the police-led killings pursuant to the government's urban-oriented war against illegal drugs. The relations between violence and modern Philippine politics cannot be fully understood without including the continuities and changes in counterinsurgent violence actualized in the various containment zones across the country. In Hanayan and these other militarized areas, life is precarious, while life outside them is comparatively more stable and secure. The distinction is reflected in my interlocutors' observations of the behavior of government troops, who appear disciplined and courteous in the

lowlands outside the containment zone, but are "brutal" toward the people they encounter inside it.

As one who lives outside the Andap Valley containment zone but has witnessed the lives of those inside it, I see the vast difference in the quality of civilian life in these two areas. I find it extraordinary that so much violence and intimidation has been directed at the Manobo of Han-ayan by the military, from the 1970s through to today. More importantly perhaps, I am puzzled by how little public outrage their dire situation has generated. It is as if the abnormal—the protracted, systematic persecution of unarmed, civilian communities by the military forces of a democratic government they had voted into office—has become normal and unremarkable to people outside the area. To echo Giroux (2015), "Where is the outrage?" The situation reminds me of the anthropologist Michael Taussig's extended meditation on the difference between seeing and witnessing (2011), in the course of which he refers to W.H. Auden's ekphrastic poem, "Musee des Beaux Artes," itself a reflection upon *The Fall of Icarus*, a painting attributed to Pieter Breughel. Taussig (2011, 130) remarks that Icarus's fall from the sky is astonishing, but that even more astonishing is the lack of astonishment demonstrated by the people in the painting, echoing Auden's view that these people were too concerned with day-to-day work and survival to care about the irruption of the extraordinary in their midst. In my own appreciation of the painting, however, the people depicted there all seem to be very studiously ignoring the fate of Icarus. They are either looking intently elsewhere—up, down, anywhere but at Icarus—or have quite simply turned their backs on him. It thus seems to me that they all know what is happening, hence, the lack of astonishment, but do not wish to acknowledge it. It is this deliberate turning away, this refusal to bear witness, which I find problematic among the people living outside the Andap Valley containment zone today, because it raises questions about violence and its place in contemporary politics, dissent and its place in Philippine democracy, indigenous autonomy and its place in national sovereignty, and witnessing and its place in a divided society.

I apologize if I somewhat unoriginally end this paper with my own reading of a social scientist's reading of a poet's reading of a painter's reading of an ancient myth. I find that the way this series of readings and rereadings have happened across centuries of time underlines enduring historical continuities in what Auden calls "suffering" in the hinterlands of the Philippines, and the consequent obligation to bear

witness to its reality, despite official reassurances that we are now living in the best of times. Certainly, the formulation of an ethical and political response to the violence continuously visited by the state upon civilian indigenous communities entails a long, complex dialogue, and for that very reason, such a dialogue needs to be initiated soonest. Perhaps sharing the tales of the Manobo with which I have been entrusted can help in this process, especially as their stories are not simply astonishing, or moving, or interesting, but most importantly, true.❁

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Factors and Forces that Led to the Marawi Debacle

CRISELDA YABES

ABSTRACT. This report is an attempt to piece together the events that led to the battle of Marawi in 2017, before rebels acting on a pledge to ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), planned a takeover to turn Marawi into a *wilayat*, or a province under an absolute Islamic state. How the events found its way to Marawi was gathered from private interviews with four intelligence officers and their analysis of classified reports, four major sources close to the Maute family, and from secret dossiers brought to the attention of former President Benigno Aquino III whose government at the time before the Marawi siege was cautious to highlight the threat. This report would also reveal the collaboration of the fighters belonging to the so-called Maute Group with a few identified foreign terrorists who have managed quite easily to slip into and stay in the country, influencing, variably, the trend of extremism among Filipino Muslims.

KEYWORDS. Marawi · Maute · violent extremism · terrorism

Introduction

No sooner had the Islamist fighters unleashed a rampage in the city of Marawi than President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in the entire Mindanao. He was out of the country, on a visit in Moscow with an entourage of military and police generals with their wives. The sudden declaration surprised the senior commanders, including the armed forces chief of staff. It came rather convenient for the president at the spur of the moment, even without having a full picture of the situation on the ground that day, May 23, 2017. There was a breakdown of governance, clearly, and intelligence culled over the previous months came to naught. The battle would last five months, with a toll of nearly one thousand killed and the city in ruins.

This report is an attempt to piece together events that led to the attack, before rebels acting on a pledge to ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and

Syria), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), planned a takeover to turn Marawi into a *wilayat*, or a province, under an absolute Islamic state. How the fight found its way to Marawi was gathered from private interviews with four intelligence officers and their analysis of classified reports, and equally from four major sources close to the Maute family who, as well as the others, asked not to be named; and also secret dossiers brought to the attention of former President Benigno Aquino, whose government, at the time before the Marawi Siege, was cautious to highlight the threat. This would also reveal the collaboration of the fighters belonging to the so-called Maute Group with a few identified foreign terrorists who have managed quite easily to slip into and stay in the country, influencing, variably, the trend of extremism among Filipino Muslims.

For nearly half a century, the Muslim insurgency has laid its cartography of rebellions, uprisings, attacks, and killings in the Mindanao south—where peace seems elusive. The Battle of Marawi in 2017, in the heart of the Islamic city in Lanao del Sur province, deviated into violent extremism that opened more fears for the future in what was an undertaking by mostly a generation of millennial fighters. The siege that lasted five months, from May to October, was unprecedented in magnitude; it challenged the military in doctrine and tactics, prompting daily sorties of air strikes that reduced Marawi to a state of destruction. It was unbelievable that two principal brothers of a family attached to the political and business elite of the Maranaos—the Muslim ethnic tribe of Lanao del Sur—had raised the stakes of Islamism beyond the call for autonomy in a fractured land.

Omarkhayam and Abdullah belonged to a family that became popularly known as the Maute Group. Their movement, small as it was in the beginning, had been going in and out of the radar of military intelligence which had a hard time pinpointing what was happening among the Muslim rebel groups, given their constant splintering and their shift to bombings and kidnappings after the military had taken down many of their original leaders. Besides, the military's focus was always on the Sulu and Basilan islands, where the radical Abu Sayyaf Group, previously linked to the Al-Qaeda and aligned with the hardcore fighters of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) that refused to yield to negotiations with the government, were operating. The MNLF leadership came mainly from Sulu, the seat of the Tausug ethnic group. The military never thought of the Maranaos of Lanao as capable of doing what the Tausugs had done. The Maranaos are mostly

traders by tradition and find constant war bad for business. But Lanao del Sur, along with other provinces in Muslim Mindanao, has long been beset with poor governance and riddled with clan violence. The military should have known, for soldiers themselves steered clear of Marawi City even before the siege to avoid getting caught in the middle of conflicts.

It was in the town of Butig where events leading up to the battle in Marawi was put into action to turn the vision of an Islamic state into a reality. It lies to the south of the omnipresent Lake Lanao, for which the province is named, a natural jewel symbolically inherent to the social and cultural lives of the Maranao people—one of the three major ethnic groups in Muslim Mindanao. There was not much to see in Butig except for the town hall that represents a token of local government, flanked by a few houses unfinished or done in makeshift. There is the basketball court outside the town hall that divides warring factions in a *rido* fight, a blood sport for revenge ingrained in the Muslim culture. (Two years after the siege, Butig would return to life with the sound of fun and excitement of a basketball tournament but only because of army presence in civil-military operations). Butig was a microcosm representing wedges in the Muslim culture that makes taking up arms uncomplicated and facile, with local leaders (albeit elected) choosing sides of warring clans rather than pursuing peace and progress.

The sight of poverty recedes out to the meadow in the wide green space, turning into forest trails that lead to a well-hidden encampment, which was an ideal spot to hide and train a rebel army. The land was looked after by the matriarch of the brothers, whose family, the Romatos, were pioneers of Butig and aligned through blood relations with one of the senior leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF had broken away from the MNLF, taking over as the current dominant rebel group that went to the peace table with the government. At the height of its strength in the 1990s, the MILF held a complex of encampments in the forest of Butig, one of which was Camp Darul Iman, which was closer to the river. It was strategically on the other side of the mountain range from the grand Camp Abubakar in neighboring Maguindanao province, which was then the seat of MILF power before the army ran it down in 2000.

It was there in Camp Abubakar and smaller camps around the border where the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) trained in their cadetship of a clandestine military school, with neophyte fighters from Indonesia and

Malaysia whose ties with Filipino rebels formed—over a period of time in scattered shifts of their ideologies—a certain kinship. They developed smaller secret cells for training sessions that broke up after the military campaign in 2000. Those who stayed in Butig came into contact, eventually, with the Maute brothers whose family was a mainstay in the town politics and linked to the MILF as well.

In Butig, graffiti on the wall of the bare concrete structure that was their barracks said it was called Camp Darul Iman (part of the complex of encampments) under the MILF from 1996 to 2015. And then the Maute brothers took over after a major disagreement with the MILF, which demanded the brothers take down the black flag they hoisted at the camp. At the time, the MILF was committed to keeping the peace talks with the government going, and the black flag was a thorn on their side of goodwill. The elder of the two, Omarkhayam, stubbornly refused, saying it was a message of Allah, and holed himself up for about a month until he decided to join his younger brother Abdullah, who had set up tents in a hamlet a few kilometers away. When the MILF abandoned Camp Darul Iman in Butig after the successive military air strikes in 2016, the brothers took over what was left of it and held their training sessions there. The army would attack the camp during what it called its Haribon campaign, named after the brigade unit based in Marawi. This campaign was alternately called the Butig campaign, referring to its location.

The Maute brothers began their jihad in early 2014. They had already returned from their Islamic studies abroad: Omarkhayam from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, where he met his Indonesian wife, (he moved with her to Jakarta before settling back home); Abdullah from Jordan where he spent close to seven years mastering the Koran and learning the jurisprudence of the Sharia law at the Al Mu'tah University. Although he was a year younger than Omarkhayam, he was considered the de facto leader because of his knowledge in Islamic religion. The Maute brothers' graduate degrees from abroad were the shining scepter of their authority. In Butig, they attracted young Maranaos from poor families who knew nothing of religious ideologies but were impressed by the thunder in which they delivered their speeches. To their recruits, they were educated, idealistic, and influential in a small, impoverished town. In time, the brothers also started recruiting kin, which proved to be a cinch because of a cultural code among Muslim clans to help or rescue family members as a matter of honor. It did not matter what they did; it was a family obligation to

protect one another. They also sought out friends of families, and then friends of friends. Many of the latter were from middle-class clans and went to good schools. As the group became more known, even children of local politicians sought them out, which was not so unusual, given that many families were armed to begin with. The last group they tapped were orphans and delinquent children sent to boarding schools called *toril*. The Maute Group was an organization of millenials. The brothers were in their thirties and so were many of their main recruits. In contrast, the MILF fighters were in their late thirties to forties.

There was a third man in this partnership, an unknown rebel who goes by the alias Abu Dar, the head of the local Khalifa Islamiya Movement. He did not have many followers, according to one former fighter who was with him, and it was believed that he joined the Mautes to compensate for this weakness. Abu Dar's full name is Humam Abdul Najid, a Maranao who studied in the far north of the country, at the Almaarif Educational Center in Baguio City. How he got there in his youth is not clear. According to the military, Abu Dar underwent military and explosives training in Afghanistan in 2005 and had also gone to Saudi Arabia as an overseas worker, returning to Mindanao in 2012 to found a militant group (that he called Khalifa Islamiyah) in Lanao del Sur. He tried to link up with the notorious Commander Bravo of the MILF's base command in Lanao, and forged ties with another base commander in the neighboring Maguindanao province, Ameril Umbra Kato. Kato broke away from his comrades from the MILF and formed the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters or the BIFF—which formally split from the MILF in 2010.[1]

Abu Dar was involved in bombings in the neighboring Christian cities of Iligan and Cagayan de Oro. He joined the brothers to bring their forces together and this was how the so-called Maute Group was formed. The government put up a bounty of three million pesos in wanted posters distributed around Butig using Dar's other alias, Owayda Benito Marohomsar.[2] In the photograph, Dar had a slightly

1. Bravo and Kato severed their ties with the MILF because they opposed the autonomy agreement with the government, claiming they wanted full independence. Kato died of an illness in 2015 and Bravo returned to the fold, later becoming a member of a Bangsamoro Transition Authority based in Cotabato City in 2019.
2. Abu Dar has another alias, Humam, which goes with what his fellow rebels said was his true name.

bearded chin, which added some charm to his smile, his head tightly wrapped in a black headband (partly to conceal a shaven head). Abu Dar was as charismatic as the brothers, but he was the type who stood inconspicuously at the back in a group, getting close and personal only when it came to teaching what he wanted to impart to his students about Allah. In that sense, he was on equal footing with Abdullah—the man who was considered the thinker, the strategist for bringing the flag of ISIS to the southern Philippines. Many of the fighters they took under their wings were in their late teens or in their twenties.

THE RECRUITMENT

Gail Tan Ilagan of the Ateneo de Davao University prepared a comprehensive report on the recruitment of the Maute fighters and their path to violent extremism. She ascribed the growth of the organization to the frustration, cynicism, and distrust of young Maranaos, stemming from the long years of peace talks with the government and the lack of fundamental growth to create normalcy in the areas of Muslim Mindanao. Similar surveys done in Iligan and Zamboanga cities and in Lanao del Sur in 2016 reported a general sense of futility in reaching a stage of Muslim self-determination. A substantial number of respondents, therefore, were leaning toward a true jihad instead, deviating from a homegrown teaching of Islam. These sentiments permeated in the universities, among young professionals and civil servants, and also the students in madrasas. Tan Ilagan's report entitled, "Toward Countering Recruitment to Violent Extremism in Mindanao," warned:

> Departing from traditionally moderate interpretations of Islam that is more the norm among Muslims in the Philippines, these radical ideas [taken from the internet, radio, etc.], represent novelty that could be sufficient to pique more than passing interest . . . It seeks to override the aspirations for a Moro homeland by injecting the urgency for the Moro to unite instead with Muslims everywhere for a pan-Islamic state. (Tan Ilagan 2017, unpublished manuscript)

In Butig, the supposed center of the soon-to-evolve ISIS community, the Maute brothers and Abu Dar conducted a "seminar" in October 2014, where the participants, about forty of them, went through some heavy soul-searching, complete with full confessions and weeping. They were supposedly to purify themselves of their sins and vices like

smoking, drinking, and fornication. They were told that this was the way to repent. One could atone for their sins as well as intercede in behalf of seventy family members in their lineage. Was this the beginning of radicalization? Was this going to be a one-way ticket to heaven? Could they erase their sins in the name of jihad, which was going to be the "roof to protect the community"? Sharia law was rarely practiced by Filipino Muslims. It was only in ISIS and in Pakistan, Brunei, and Saudi Arabia that punishment by stoning for certain instances of fornication were done. By introducing this to a future of the Islamic State, the Maute leaders hoped to turn the world of Filipino Muslims—one that was generally moderate, secular, and still adhering to folk mysticism—upside down. If the recruits felt they knew very little of what true Islam was, in this "seminar" they finally found their true education. The seminars were a hard blow to their conscience and there was no let-up to changing minds and hearts until their leaders were convinced of a full conversion. They were lectured in a mix of soft tones and hard ones, to go by the high emotions of the moment. At night the participants mulled over the lessons in their sleeping bags or *malong*.

In the last phase of the seminar, the recruits were ordered to familiarize themselves with weapons. This was not altogether unusual because having a gun in a Muslim household is as normal as having a pot in the kitchen. They were shown a rocket propelled grenade, or an RPG—the kind of weapon that paralyzed military armors in the first days of the Marawi Siege. They were told that, by way of *hadith*, even carrying a weapon alone was going to make them blessed, which would come with heavenly rewards. They were then made to walk for an hour from their bare lodgings to an open field that was to be their training ground. They went through a ring of fire; they crawled in and out of tunnels; their adrenaline fueled when live bullets rained on them. The training was supposed to give them a sense of how it was like to be in a real firefight. At the end of the training, they marched in a parade like an army that was born. Abdullah led them, riding on a horse and waving a black banner that had an Arabic emblem that said, "There is no god but Allah. Mohammad is the messenger of Allah."

By the time they returned to Camp Darul Iman in Butig later that year, in December 2014, they had completed their all-around training. It was time to fight, to become martyrs and absolve themselves and their families of their sins. In that meeting, Abdullah did most of the talking while Abu Dar quietly stood at the back. Omarkhayam was the

brother, eager for the trigger, who would draw first blood. In February 2016, in an operation called Butig 1, he led an attack against an army detachment in Butig's town hall. Abdullah apparently did not know about this plan of his brother to give the young recruits their baptism of fire. When the army fought back, Abdullah was forced to bring in reinforcement of about fifty men, and the firefight lasted for days, this time with bombs and artillery. Abdullah was upset at his brother for having done such a thing. "The enemy is here," Omarkhayam was quoted as having told his younger brother. "Why do I need to ask permission [to launch an attack]? The enemy is here, why shouldn't we fight?"[3] The young recruits were also eager for a fight, emboldened by what they heard had happened a year before, when rebels ambushed an army truck traveling on a major bridge between Iligan and Marawi. And Butig 1 did yield political dividends for the Maute Group. A senior-ranking fighter said the group, which first had a small army of thirty, grew to about two hundred forces, and by the time the battle of Marawi started, they had about six hundred fighting against government forces to gain control of Lanao del Sur's capital.

During pursuit operations, the military was able to recover documents telling of the existence of a group called Daulat ul Islamiyyah (commonly called Daulah Islamiyah) of which Abdullah was the leader. This was a name interchangeable with the Maute Group and Abu Dar's Khalifa Islamiya, so much so that their own neighbors could not tell them apart. The group would soon be part of a conglomeration of local terrorist groups, including the BIFF in Maguindanao and Ansar al-Khalifa in Sarangani, that swore allegiance to the ISIS. The documents were also an indication that the Maute brothers were coming out into the open, when previously, they had kept themselves hidden from the eyes and ears of the military. The military also retrieved improvised explosive devices, an ISIS flag, and handbooks by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi of Iraq, the leader of ISIS. The documents should have left the military little doubt that there was a new group. Yet, it had downplayed the threat even up to the early months of President Duterte's term in office that began in July 2016.

The documents recovered after the operations revealed additional information about the training camp and Abu Dar's training of his recruits, guided by a *Lone Mujahid* pocketbook. They also showed that

3. The military believed it was Abu Dar who reinforced Omarkhayam's unprovoked attack on the military detachment.

the ambush was in retribution for the deaths of two rebels killed in a firefight. Finally, one report stated that Abu Dar had been kicked out by Commander Bravo from his stronghold in the northern part of Lanao and had found his way to Commander Kato's area, and had possibly made his visit to Basilan where there are towns occupied by both the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf before he found himself back in Lanao del Sur and in the fields of Butig.

In due time, the Maute brothers aroused the curiosity of intelligence operatives when copies of their passports were found after a November 2012 shootout that killed an Indonesian terrorist named Sanusi in the campus of Mindanao State University in Marawi. Sanusi, who had been the object of a manhunt for years, was a key figure in the terrorist cells of Southeast Asia. The military believed that he might be related to Omarkhayam's Indonesian wife. Oddly, the Maute name hardly rang a bell then. The intelligence operatives figured the brothers were mere "affiliates" to Sanusi, who, upon his death, was a ranking leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) that earlier had access to the camp in Butig.

Sanusi, who took the Arabic name Ibnu Gholib al-Jitli as nom de guerre, fled to the Philippines in 2006 after he was accused of beheading three Christian girls on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. As a ranking JI figure, he was able to embed himself in Lanao, marrying a local Muslim girl and becoming the pipeline between Islamic rebels in the Philippines to outside terrorist groups. He, likewise, was able to arrange the training of foreign jihadists in Mindanao. The Philippines was the "enabling environment" for hiding foreign terrorists, with its weak internal security and porous borders. Anything was readily grown in Muslim Mindanao over the course of decades of on-again, off-again fighting, like a nest that could breed a host for a string of rebellions, criminal syndicates, private armies, or any of the kind. They meld into each other, forming a nebulous picture, making it difficult to squarely address the trouble in the south. The military was either a step behind any trend or unwilling to take risks on a bigger scale without a strategic push from national government policy.

Thus, foreign terrorists could in some ways manipulate outcomes for Filipino Muslim rebels, one of which was an escalation of bombings. The figure who represented such action was the Malaysian terrorist Zulkipli Bin Hir—whose alias was Marwan.

Marwan had been in the Philippines all along, marrying the widow of Abu Sayyaf leader Khadafy Janjalini, who was killed in a firefight in Sulu in 2006. He later fled Sulu in haste following an Air Force strike

that hit the rebels' jungle base in Sulu with precision-guided weapons. The attack killed a key Abu Sayyaf leader, angering the commander who forced Marwan and his cohorts to leave for unexplained reasons, but which the military surmised was the outcome of factional rivalries within the group. Marwan took refuge with Sanusi in Butig, crossing the sea, from where he moved to the hamlets of the MILF-controlled Mamasapano in Maguindanao. Marwan came to notorious prominence when he was killed in a police operation in January 2015. That incident provoked national tragedy on account of forty-four police commandos killed in a botched plan to capture Marwan in MILF-controlled hamlets. The political fallout caused the breakdown of then-President Aquino's plan to offer a new autonomous law for Muslim Mindanao in a deal signed with the MILF leadership. In fact, it was this lack of coordination that was said to have caused the Mamasapano incident in January 2015; but Marwan's Filipino partner, Basit Usman, who led the Ansar al-Khalifa in Sarangani, was killed in the hands of the MILF four months after the Mamasapano incident in 2015, ostensibly to show its good faith in the negotiations with the government.

In many areas of Mindanao, brewing trouble was not to be as surprising as the one that was happening in Butig. The younger rebels had everything in place: ideal location, family connections (which means money), an ideology to move forward where their elders had left off and chosen cooperation with the government. The presence of foreign terrorists and the exposure to social media had invariably changed the vision of what Islam is supposed to be. In January 2014, Abu Dar and the brothers met with the MILF at the camp to resolve certain issues. The MILF, according to a Maute relative, did not want the black banner flying and this became a point of contention. The army was already aware of this meeting, so the army brigade commander requested for an operation by February, but this was turned down without prior permission from a ceasefire committee.

In March 2014, the Maute brothers were already in place in the camp. A satellite visual recording a few months later showed what looked like a black flag flying over Camp Darul Iman. The people observed were going to pledge their allegiance to the ISIS and be recognized and approved by the latter to create a *wilayat* or province. It was done in April 2015, and in the following year, ISIS accepted that allegiance, as shown in a newsletter online. In the scheme of things, the south of the Philippines was a small dot to the Islamic State that was being entrenched in Mosul, Iraq, and in Raqqa, Syria. It took time for

the splintering rebel groups to align and decide to veer the way of the ISIS (and yet, not all joined the same path for various reasons, some unknown, others political). If the genesis had started in Butig, were they to start the wilayat there, or go directly to the Islamic capital, Marawi? The answer to that came in May 2017.

In the weeks leading to the training of the recruits in October 2014, there were leaflets distributed in the central mosque of Marawi, quoting passages in the Koran written in Maranao referencing a jihad. Text messages were making the rounds to go to the mosque. In 2015, the Maute Group stepped up their activities with a series of attempts to kill soldiers or policemen, the bombings of electric power lines using improvised explosives, and the random killings of ordinary Christian vendors eking out a living in Marawi. Targeted killings of Christians was something new, as it was extremely rare in the past, although tensions between Muslims and Christians in Marawi had usually been more pronounced than, say, the Sulu islands. Many of these incidents took place in the capital Marawi, about forty kilometers north of Butig, so that when Butig 1/Haribon 1 turned into a firefight, there was no connecting of the dots as of then. The radicals of the group displayed their brand of fighting online when they showed the beheading of Christian workers who had been kidnapped from a logging site and taken to Butig where the brothers had initially set up camp.

Gail Tan Ilagan's report stated that in mainland Mindanao (i.e., Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur provinces), mosques and madrasas, especially those funded by money from Saudi Arabia, were said to be places for potential recruits, "identified through their devout worship, their regular participation in Islamic seminars, and the kind of earnest questions they ask during such gatherings." While the boarding schools of the toril essentially confine their students and hold them captive to extremist indoctrination, "there is little indication of the success of mass recruitment, if indeed such is being attempted in the first place." In Marawi, the toril were known to be the parents' last resort for delinquent children, but for some who found out that their children were being trained in Butig under harsh conditions and, in some extreme cases, were sent to tiny, isolated islands on the lake, they attempted to take them back. The orphans were a much easy prey.

THE BUTIG CAMPAIGN

Butig 2/Haribon 2 broke out three months after the first one, in May 2016. The military was able to identify four small encampments in the Butig hideout and began firing artillery in their direction. There were those from the Maute Group that were training in Piagapo, near west of Marawi. They came to the rescue of the fighters in Butig and were able to bring the battle back against the military before the start of the Ramadan in June. The fighters were told that striking during the Holy Month would mean having their heavenly rewards multiplied. But the military bombardment had taken its toll. Many were wounded and escaped to the lake using a banca to seek medical assistance elsewhere.

This second operation lasted for more than a week. For the young recruits, this was their first real taste of firefight. Others sought refuge back in Piagapo, where there was a training camp, while others went back to their homes, keeping a low profile while waiting to be called into action again. While doing so, they learned how to dig tunnels and rat holes—something that would be useful during the Marawi Siege the following year. After Butig 2/Haribon 2, the group continued recruiting among close relatives, school children, and orphans. Rogue fighters from the MILF and the breakaway BIFF also joined, beefing up a force not of ragtag but young, solid fighters. There were some women who also trained to use rifles.

In late August that year, Abu Dar led a jailbreak that became the stuff of news in Marawi, attesting to the Maute Group's audacity.[4] There were setbacks, however; Abu Dar's wife, two of the Maute sisters, and five men were arrested at a checkpoint after their van was stopped on the way to Marawi from Butig. Police found pistols and materials for making bombs inside the vehicle (or they could have been planted, which is a common practice in the police force for quick arrests of suspected terrorists). The Mautes' mother had political connections and tried to have them released on bail or through some other arrangement with prison officials. Both did not pan out in time.

That checkpoint arrest gave the military a goldmine of information when they retrieved a laptop from one of the men arrested, who was believed to be the one in charge of the group's social media communications. He was able to provide a wider reach of their

4. Abu Dar led the daring act, his wife having taken with her two of their children whom she was still breastfeeding. His wife was later caught in General Santos City in July 2018, and taken to jail in Manila where she gave birth to another child.

influence, as was done in the recruitment of fighters to Syria from different parts of the world. The laptop also had pictures of the young fighters, mug shots that would be printed on tarpaulins for the wanted men posters of the rebel group. The Maute Group was now out in the open, a presence that could not be ignored. Social media had played a huge role in the rebellion of the younger recruits; it gave them the impetus to be different, whether real or not, and to aspire for an identity that had been missing all their lives, perhaps regardless of how they see their faith in the lay of their land that bred violence. In the decades of Muslim insurgency, a keg had already matured into a concoction of a rebellion; besides which, possessing a weapon remained, constantly, part and parcel of their identity.

By the time December 2016 came around, there were random air strikes leading up to what would next become Butig 3/Haribon 3. The rebels were caught off guard, retreating to the hinterland border of Maguindanao. There, they stayed silent. Some of the fighters had heard that one of the Abu Sayyaf leaders, Isnilon Hapilon, was coming from Basilan island to join them. The military had information that he had landed by boat along the northwestern coast by Illana Bay, along with fifty passengers among whom were supposedly foreign fighters. This was the basis for the third operation, believing that after such a heavy bombardment, Hapilon might have gotten killed or wounded. By all accounts, this was big news. But Hapilon actually did not arrive in Lanao until the second week of January 2017, according to one of the fighters, when the Maute brothers' group was already settled back in Butig after the military operation. He had his own team of men, including his son, and was given his own camp where only Abdullah and Omarkhayam could see him.

Hapilon visited the young recruits in their camps, introducing himself as the "Emir of East Asia." He had the look of a man in his fifties and was physically fit. He was wearing the typical robe of a *tabligh* missionary, with a turban that was to be a part of his persona. He seemed intimidating, too. He spoke to his men in Tausug but spoke to the Maranaos in Tagalog with a heavy accent. He also stayed with these young fighters for the noon prayer. He told them it was his obligation to stand as the emir, following a designation awarded to him by the higher ranks of ISIS "even though he didn't want it," according to one of the recruits who was there and heard him speak. Once in Lanao, he basically took over the leadership of the Maute Group from Abdullah. The Maranao fighters assumed that Hapilon had closer ties

with ISIS based on what they saw on social media. The brothers' domain was limited to Lanao.

Military reports indicated that the announcement of Hapilon's rise to emir was done earlier in the Maute home in Marawi in June 2016. During that period, another key terrorist with the alias of Tokboy was holding court. His real name, Mohammad Jaafar Maguid, was also a Maranao who had been arrested and later escaped. He was in the same league as Marwan, both categorized as "bombers." He replaced Basit Usman of the Mamasapano incident, shifting the base of the Ansar al-Khalifa between Sarangani and neighboring Sultan Kudarat province. Tokboy allegedly masterminded the market bombing in Davao City in August 2016—breaking the myth that President Duterte's bailiwick was safe and infallible. Tokboy was nearly caught in November 2015 when Marines were going after militants in Sultan Kudarat province. Instead, they killed an Indonesian named Saifullah Ibrahim (aka Ibrahim Ali). This turned out to be a significant pursuit. Secret documents that reached the desk of then-President Aquino revealed that Ibrahim Ali, alias Sucipto, was being groomed to be the emir for ISIS in Southeast Asia. No other intelligence gathering had the same findings, saying that it was not logical for Filipino rebels to kowtow to a foreigner. It was one thing to have them train and teach in the underground fight, but quite another to have them lead the local militant groups to be galvanized into one cause.

Sucipto was a top student in the first batch of the JIs who trained in Camp Abubakar in 1992, and was then selected to help command the organization's operations in southern Philippines. He was caught in Sabah en route to Indonesia. Rather than deport him to Indonesia, Malaysian authorities sent him to the Philippines where he had pending charges on bombing incidents in Mindanao. He was jailed for years in a maximum-security prison in Manila but was acquitted in 2014 for lack of evidence. Philippine authorities let him go scot-free instead of deporting him to Indonesia. The first thing he did upon his release was to visit Marwan in Mamasapano. He later linked up with Tokboy in Sultan Kudarat, where he was shot and killed in November 2015. These provinces had become host to burgeoning underground militant activities, aided by an easy access to Indonesia. Tokboy was particularly close to young Filipino men who were referred to as the *Balik Islam*—Christians who had converted to Islam in mosques in other parts of the country as well as overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East who had been converted by the Salafist and Wahhabi

ideologies. It was the radicals who moved to the mainland of Mindanao for the underground Islamist movement.[5]

Tokboy was killed in a shootout against intelligence agents in a beach resort in Sarangani province in January 2017. This was around the time Hapilon had set foot in Lanao province. The story of why Hapilon was chosen to be emir has yet to be unearthed; one former police officer surmised that the rebel groups were "scraping the bottom of the barrel," meaning there was no other choice after many of the key leaders had been killed. Why did not the other Abu Sayyaf leaders in Sulu support Hapilon? Were the rumors of a leadership split true? Hapilon's religious mooring was "very strong" by far, so why did not the others follow? He was one of Khadafy Janjalani's lieutenants though he was not a favorite. He was a Yakan, not a Tausug. Was this the reason why, by being the newly anointed emir, his recourse was to join forces with the Maute brothers of Lanao?

The young fighters in Butig were in awe of Hapilon, coming face-to-face with the warrior who had been around since the inception of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu in the late 1990s. Hapilon's five million-peso prize on his head made him a high-value target but also enhanced his stature. The military was not too far behind, closing in on him but hitting on the wrong targets of the camps. The rebel group had already put up a "new" camp of tents and shelters. Following an inspirational speech from Hapilon during a private and personal meeting, the fighters moved to Piagapo, crossing Lake Lanao and settling by the site near a tower that was once an American settlement in the colonial days of the early 1900s. Located by the hills that stood at the edge of a plain, it had the remains of solid bunkers where they could hide. An imam who was formerly with the MILF took care of the place. The group stayed there for about a month, during which time there was talk of a big Marawi operation, similar to what they had heard when Hapilon came to Butig. The other fighters, about one hundred of them, set up camp surreptitiously and separately in the barangays around Marawi. A big plan was afoot.

Those involved in the terrorism watch assumed that Hapilon needed space, freedom of movement, and foreign supporters because

5. The role of the converts is another story to tell: they who joined the battle of Marawi and were said to be hardliners fighting at the front line. One of the last ones to hold out even after the death of the leader Hapilon during the siege was said to be a Balik Islam.

his narrow territory in Basilan was overrun by constant deployment of army troops. In the Mindanao mainland, however, there was a large area to maneuver. Abu Dar had told his men that it was imperative (a *dalil*) to follow Hapilon as the chosen emir and anyone who did not do so was considered a traitor, or a *kafir*. The fighters thus ended up regrouping in Butig, Piagapo, and Marawi. Having received intelligence reports of this movement by Hapilon and other foreign terrorists, the military launched an operation from January until the first week of March 2017.[6] The rebels did not in any way respond to the bombings and steered clear of military operations. Soldiers would discover the camps empty and did not know what to make of it. The rebels discovered a military spy amid their ranks, a young unlettered boy who was close to Abdullah. They would use him to provide the military with wrong information as well as false targets. No one knew what happened to the boy, but the officer for whom he was spying was killed in a rubout in Marawi in February 2017.

Then in April 2017, the brigade commander camp asked for more troops when reports filtered in that there was going to be another attack. When elite special forces moved into Piagapo, fighting ensued.[7] It took Air Force strikes to stop the rebels and they thought that was the end of it, and that it would take time before the rebels could regroup again and strike somewhere else. As it turned out, the military was very wrong. Soon after conducting the Piagapo operation, their attention was suddenly diverted to going after communist rebels operating at the border into Bukidnon on the eastern flank of Lanao del Sur. The army camp in Marawi was left vulnerable with only about a company on guard. This explains why, despite receiving naval intelligence reports all the way from the Western Command in Zamboanga warning of an impending threat by Hapilon and his comrades, the local command was in no position to prevent the siege of Marawi by the rebels on May 23.

6. During one of the firefights, it was possible that Hapilon had been wounded or killed, but this was never confirmed.
7. Piagapo was relatively a progressive town compared to others in Lanao del Sur province, and the local government more or less cooperated with the military in house searches after the Piagapo operation that took over the rebel camp and dismantled their base.

CONCLUSION

The Battle of Marawi was officially declared over after the military killed Isnilon Hapilon and Omarkhayam Maute in mid-October 2017. Abdullah Maute, too, was believed killed earlier in the siege but his corpse was not found. Abu Dar escaped and tried to put a new army together. His plan was short-lived; he was killed in a firefight with an army platoon in mid-March 2019, in an area a mere thirty kilometers from Butig. Marawi, however, has never recovered from the battle. It remains a devastated area and its residents have yet to receive the government aid promised by President Duterte who, later in his speeches, relinquished those promises to rebuild Marawi, saying there were enough wealthy Maranao families who could provide the needed help, and blamed the illegal drug trade and corruption money as impetus for the violence. By reducing the causes and aftermath of the Marawi Siege to a black-and-white issue, the government would likely fail to address the Muslims' future in nation-building, as previous administrations lacked foresight and cutting-edge policies.

The narrative of how Marawi came into fruition remains incomplete. There are still many unanswered questions. For example, how does one draw links and connect dots from place to place (rebel strongholds) and people to people (rebel leaders) before the plot to take over Marawi was hatched? Is it the clandestine movement of foreign terrorists vis-à-vis the local rebel movement that spelled a change in the trajectory of the Muslim insurgency? Mapping out the links and alliances would be as tough and arduous as unspooling the threads binding the clans and family loyalties, not to mention their place as dynastic families in the sphere of local governance. But it was certainly the call to violence over the years, the inability to stop it at all cost, that made the southern enclaves of Muslim Mindanao an open field.

The military had the wilayat plan in their hands only after the attempt to arrest Hapilon triggered the Marawi Siege, in a house that was a couple of kilometers from the brigade camp and a few meters away from the mosque. The attempt was a failure but it had a silver lining of preempting the takeover that was supposed to have started on the first day of Ramadan three days later. If the intelligence report had not arrived in the nick of time and the raid had not been carried out, Marawi might have been lost altogether.

It was only in the Philippines where Islamist rebels were aiming for an East Asia wilayat, the Holy Grail, so to speak, to get ISIS recognition

(Jones 2018). While the Abu Sayyaf of the Philippines and the Jemaah Islamiyah of Indonesia were originally linked to Al-Qaeda, their goals overlapped with those of ISIS, thus bringing them under the banner of the Daulah Islamiyah, or the Daulat ul Islamiyah. Sidney Jones, a conflict analyst, said they could very well do that under the usual circumstances in southern Philippines, but it was a much bigger undertaking to have every group of Southeast Asia together, or what was envisioned to be a wilayat in the region. Clearly, from the time foreign terrorists set foot in Mindanao, initially for training in Camp Abubakar in the 1990s, the movement had altered the configuration of local rebel groups into an amorphous threat bound by varied ideological preferences, drawing a thin line between banditry and terrorism, and a marriage of convenience.

Under what conditions were Filipino rebels willing to take in their counterparts from Indonesia or Malaysia or elsewhere? Is their fight refracted from what they had learned abroad—in the Middle East and South Asia? What of it has remained homegrown? The Philippine Muslim narrative is different from that of their Southeast Asian neighbors, Jones pointed out—does this mean they have to fill in gaps or were they bonded in circumstances from the days of Camp Abubakar? The Maute brothers were supposed to recreate what ISIS accomplished in Mosul, Iraq; Omarkhayam was said to have trained his sight on that goal with the help of an Indonesian from Central Java named Abu Wali, alias Faiz, according to Jones. Philippine records identified him as Muhammad Saifuddin but he used the name Mohammad Yusuf Karim Faiz, who was only twenty-six when he was arrested in Zamboanga in 2004 as he landed at the port on charges of being an "undesirable" and of possessing illegal firearms and explosives. He was jailed in a special cell in Manila until March 2014, when he and another Indonesian and a Malaysian—all suspected terrorists—were acquitted by a regional trial court for lack of evidence and were immediately deported to Indonesia under a Blacklist Order.

This was more than a year after Sanusi was killed in a shoot-out in Marawi. The Indonesians did not want Faiz back but the court had given a verdict. From Jakarta, Faiz went on to fight with the ISIS in Syria, at the same time keeping his contacts in the Philippines. Omarkhayam became a strong link because he could speak in fluent Bahasa, and through this, the idea of a wilayat was nourished. Yet, as the fighting in Marawi raged, ISIS was losing control of Raqqa in Syria. Though there were calls instead for Islamist outsiders to join their

fellow rebels in the Philippines, judging from social media interactions, few came, and it was not until three months later, when the military was already gaining momentum in the urban battleground, that ISIS itself acknowledged the sphere of an East Asia wilayat—though it was too late for the fighters of the Maute Group. They were losing men and running out of food when government forces cornered them in a block near the lake of Marawi to where they were hoping to escape.

The recent precedence to the fighting in Marawi took place in Zamboanga City in November 2013, when MNLF rebels tried to take over a coastal community in an armed tantrum over the government's peace negotiations with its rival the MILF. But Marawi took on a bigger dimension, with younger and educated men, with audacity and clever maneuverings, with an ideological ring attached to violent extremism. It was not just any other fight. They made their older predecessors look almost irrelevant by the way they fought, and by doing so, a page has turned in the history of the Muslim rebellion in southern Philippines. A report commissioned by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process showed that, in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege, there was cause for alarm that the Bangsamoro leadership was losing control over the younger generation of fighters. There was fear that corruption, patronage, and factions among the Muslim leaders, elected or otherwise, will remain "the order of the day"—with distrust among the people in their own leaders to implement true change, as amplified by the disorganized rehabilitation plan for Marawi. The city itself, even before the siege, had degenerated into a chaotic amalgam of crime, zealotry, and tribal politics. The cause for rebellion by the younger generation could be understood in many prisms, not one alone. Their elders and leaders, as well as forces governing national policies, have handed them a mess of a future. How could they possibly climb out of that?

At the start, Muslim leaders had carried the torch of nationalism, pushing for self-identity and self-determination. Nur Misuari of the MNLF became a failed revolutionary who was the first to broker peace with the government, obtaining his seat as governor of an autonomous region, only to be reduced into a spoiled, whining leader trapped in a web of corruption and ethnic rivalries. Salamat Hashim of the MILF was caught in the larger debate of the Arab world and into the internal schism of Islam but found himself in his last days returning to the words of Sufi, his illness triggered by the loss of Camp Abubakar. His body was buried in an unmarked grave in the mountains of Butig. It was the outcome of the Arab debate that, according to Professor

Julkipli Wadi of the University of the Philippines, gave rise to Al-Queda and, consequently, ISIS (Julkipli Wadi, pers. comm.). The Muslims of the Philippines, he said, was led to (or followed) the trend of the global structure of power that elicited cultural fragmentation in the Muslim world in the shaping of a nation-state from as far back as the eighteenth century.

The differences among Islamic movements were sharpened, like "chickens inside the cockpit," with fundamentalists on both sides fighting each other. The call for Islamic hegemony eventually trickled down to the Muslims of Mindanao who were tempted to take the bait because, at home, "they were not given an opportunity to resolve their problems" but as a consequence were forced to face a mimic image of themselves among many forces—not knowing who among them were their friends or enemies. Was it the Christians of the north? Was it their leaders? Was it the misunderstanding of religion? Was it the influence of the outside world? The lure of extremism may have been tempting because, according to Wadi, "for every time there is a peace process and it reaches a crucial moment, it causes the emergence of another group"—thus, from the MNLF, to the MILF, to the Abu Sayyaf, to the BIFF, until it reached the crescendo of violent extremism under the young fighters who wanted to take over the Islamic City, not because the city was truly Islamic but because it had changed into an underworld of drug trafficking, gun running, and shameless corruption. The beauty of what Marawi used to be stays in the memories of the old timers who remain attached to a pre-Islamic heritage, driven by the belief that they are the true people of the lake. The Maute brothers and their cohorts would not have known any of that. They wanted to create the Marawi of their own vision, even if it happened to be an amalgam of ideas culled from foreign Islamists attempting to extend their claws beyond their reach, both in terms of religion and culture.

But Marawi being land-locked, "it was so easy to throw the seed of whatever you want to grow, including Islamic orthodoxy," Professor Wadi said of the Maranao tribe. The battle of Marawi was concluded as the largest combat operation in urban warfare of contemporary Philippine history. The extremists have done it, and the tune has changed from counterinsurgency to countering or preventing violent extremism. One of Wadi's students, Lt. Al-Qatar Kamlian, a Muslim officer in the Philippine Army's Special Forces, noted in his academic paper, "Understanding Extremist Ideology," for his master's degree in Asian studies, that government forces must rethink current approaches

by countering the narrative which remains a key strategy in the struggle to diminish extremist ideology. "In doing so, enlisting the religious sector, community-based civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders will form a genuine partnership that would develop an effective reach beyond the traditional dimension of the society."

This is a tall order, considering an array of systemic problems wracking Muslim Mindanao for decades: inefficient governance; inept social services; high levels of divisions along ethnic and religious lines; endemic political and economic marginalization; low levels of development with high levels of poverty, social injustice, and inequality. This goes on without mentioning that the government has no clear policy on deradicalization or even countering it. The tragedy in Marawi was "an awakening to every dimension of Philippine society," the paper said, and, therefore, there must be an urgency in government to respond to the evolving threat. The military may have scored victories in their kinetic targets, but the ground zero of Marawi, still in rubbles, still eerie in its emptiness, stands as a desolate memorial to the consequence of violence.

In early 2019, roughly two years after the Marawi Siege began, a new Bangsamoro authority was put in place for a regional election in the near future, for a new autonomous government. It is imperative that it forges ahead in its map to define a resurgence of Muslim pride and demand equality among Filipinos; to reel back would no doubt bring Mindanao into a spiral deeper into violence, serving yet again the ingredients for another Marawi in the making.❁

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Mirroring Duterte

KAROL ILAGAN, AGATHA FABRICANTE, AND CHRISTINE FABRO

ABSTRACT. This case study focuses on the role of the local media in creating an environment favorable for forwarding the political propaganda against illegal drugs in Davao City. The local newspaper of Davao, the *Mindanao Daily Mirror* appeared to serve as a mouthpiece of those in power in Davao City rather than as an inquirer, watchdog, or representative of the Davaoeños. Through reviewing 256 news reports and interviewing journalists, this research casts light on how the media was used in antidrug campaigns and how it framed the narratives behind the operations in relation to the drug war in Davao City.

KEYWORDS. *Mindanao Daily Mirror* · Rodrigo Duterte · Davao City · local media · antidrug campaigns · political propaganda

Introduction

When he first became Davao City mayor in 1988, Rodrigo R. Duterte made a promise to his constituency: "to make the city the most dangerous place for criminals." More than three decades later and against a backdrop of vigorous attempts to stamp out communism and crime by at least four presidents, Duterte, now the country's chief executive, has kept and extended his local pledge through a "war on drugs" at the national level. The use of illegal drugs must indeed be addressed, but the president's antidrug strategy has so far targeted the poor, with thousands killed by police and motorcycle-riding gunmen.

Except for when the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) initiated a formal inquiry into his link to the vigilante group Davao Death Squad (DDS) in 2009, Duterte received little criticism for the most part of his thirty-year rule as mayor, vice mayor, and district representative. But the tide would turn when Duterte rose to power as president in 2016, as Filipino and international news outlets and human rights groups reported and investigated his administration's role in the extrajudicial killings resulting from his antidrug campaign.

In the age of social media where news reach audiences worldwide, a critical eye was cast on Duterte, his drug war placed under scrutiny. But the president has not taken criticism lightly. Journalists have been threatened and harassed. A senator, the former CHR chair who investigated him, is in prison.

Back in Davao City, a number of reporters and editors who worked for media outlets there have joined the Duterte administration in various posts in government. At least one community paper, the *Mindanao Daily Mirror*, is said to have changed ownership and is now a constant source of news about Duterte's aide-turned-senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" T. Go. Leading up to the campaign period for the 2019 midterm elections, the *Mirror* started a new tradition of choosing its "Man of the Year." The editors' pick for the inaugural issue was Go, "the one person who made the headlines for his or her positive impact on the community."

The difference between the two scenarios is stark, pointing to a tendency on how Duterte and his group see the media and how it should be dealt with—and vice versa. In Davao City, certain news outlets mirror Duterte, uncritical of what his government is doing. Yet on the national stage, Duterte faces a press that cannot always be treated like papers such as the *Mirror*. This paradox opens avenues for research about the varying repertoires of engagement that the president has been using when dealing with the local and national press and the other way around. The troubled relationship between Duterte and several Metro Manila-based news organizations with respect to how the drug war is being reported is quite evident today. But the context, nuances, and implications of the former mayor's engagement with the community press in Davao City leave room for examination.

In this paper, we trace how local newspapers in Davao City, using *Mindanao Daily Mirror* as case study, reported drug-related events before Duterte became president. Founded in the 1950s, the *Mirror* was selected in this research because it is one of the longest running newspapers in Mindanao and because old copies of the publication are more accessible than other dailies. At the Ateneo de Davao University Library, two researchers scanned all of *Mirror*'s issues from 1986 (May to December), 1998 (January to December), and 2009 (January to December) and found a total of 256 articles related to illegal drugs. The year 1986 was chosen because this was the year Duterte first served in local government—when he was appointed officer-in-charge as vice mayor by former President Corazon Aquino following the 1986

People Power Revolution. The year 1998 was also included because it was among the early years when various groups started documenting killings known to be the handiwork of the Davao Death Squad, and 2009, as this was the year when CHR conducted an investigation into the summary executions of drug suspects.

After gathering the news reports, the researchers, together with a third-party member, coded each article for a pretest which was then reviewed and approved by a statistician. The *Mirror* articles were then coded and analyzed in full using subject, sourcing, placement of article, and type of reporting as variables.

Through interviews with six journalists and media experts, the researchers surface first-hand accounts and insights on the challenges experienced by the community press as these intersect with the political and economic interests of local power holders.

This paper begins with a look at the role of the community press and their interactions with politicians. Albeit limited in scope, the narrative of the drug war as reported by the *Mirror* vis-à-vis events taking place at the national level is also presented. Next, the researchers discuss how the *Mirror* covered news about illegal drugs in Davao City in 1986, 1998, and 2009. Special focus is given on how the CHR investigation was covered, as it was one of few stories of resistance in Duterte's local drug war. Finally, journalists who have covered and observed developments in Davao City weigh in on the coverage of Duterte and drug-related events in the city.

THE *MIRROR* AND DUTERTE'S DRUG WAR IN DAVAO CITY

The history and development of the community press in the Philippines have been documented since the 1960s in various academic papers, from community journalism scholar Crispin Maslog's (1993) surveys to journalism professor Jeremaiah Opiniano and his students Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas, Mia Rosienna Mallari, and Jhoana Paula Tuazon's (2015) more recent study on the roles, status, and prospects of the community press. Journalists and journalism educators Luz Rimban (1999), Red Batario (2001), and Chay Florentino-Hofileña (2001 and 2004), meanwhile, have written extensively about the challenges faced by community reporters during the years covered in this study. The media situation in the Philippines has also been assessed on a regular basis by international advocacy groups Freedom House, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and Reporters Without Borders.

From development journalism in the 1970s wherein the role of journalists has been described as to report on local socioeconomic issues that are underreported, the role of community journalism is said to have evolved to civic journalism in which reporters write about issues and engage with audiences to allow them to discuss said issues (Opiniano et al. 2015).

As cited in Opiniano et al.'s study (2015), Red Batario, executive director of the Center for Community Journalism and Development, describes how, in an ideal setting, a community paper is able to do civic journalism. The process starts with the paper reporting on an issue, to be followed by activities such as dialogues wherein journalists bring together stakeholders to discuss such issues. These stakeholders then become sources in follow-up stories in the paper. If done accordingly, these stories may create impact by deterring powers-that-be from making decisions that may be deemed detrimental to the community.

That is the ideal setting. Using Thomas Hanitzsch's (2011) study which tested four milieus of journalistic cultures (populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent, and opportunist facilitator), the researchers found that community newspapers in the Philippines play two roles: that of a critical change agent and that of an opportunist facilitator. Some community papers have become critical change agents in the sense that their reporters, critical toward government and business elites, advocate for social change. But other papers meanwhile have been described as opportunist-facilitators in the sense that because they, too, are business ventures, they must relate with whoever is in power so as "to collar not just political ties but possible revenues from local coffers." Journalists in these news outlets are depicted as constructive partners of government; they most likely support official policies and convey a positive image of political and business leaders.

Taking on the critical change agent role is a standard element of journalism. But the latter function, opportunistic facilitator, emerges primarily because many small community papers obtain revenue mainly from advertisements. These advertisements typically come from: (1) government in the form of judicial notices, local ordinances, and public bidding notices; (2) politicians through campaign advertisements when they join the triennial elections; and (3) businesses which may likely be owned by political allies or the politicians themselves.

This finding draws parallels from Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's propaganda model, which argues that among the media's

functions is "to serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them" (Herman and Chomsky ([1988] 2002, xi). It points to how resources like money and power can determine what gets printed or marginalize dissent, essentially allowing government and other private interests to get their messages across to the public.

The propaganda model uses five filters that influence the framing of news, the first three of which are found to be relevant in this paper: (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

Former senator Orlando Mercado (1991) and veteran journalist Sheila Coronel (1991) meanwhile discuss the relationship between politicians and journalists in a March 1990 conference on media and politics in Asia. Anthologized in a book in 1991, the observations and insights put forth in their papers still ring true today (Hernandez and Pfennig 1991).

Mercado, a former politician and a radio broadcaster, says politicians are much like media owners in as much as they, too, have their own political and personal interests. Getting one's name in the paper for government officials is as important as having passed a bill into law, he says. Having one's photo taken for publication or being interviewed over TV and radio has even become a major preoccupation in most instances. Media need politicians and politicians need the press. They are joined together in what Mercado describes as a "love-hate" relationship, as there have been cases of political leaders who were "made" and "unmade" by media.

But Coronel points out that underneath the seeming adversity between politicians and journalists is the unspoken and comfortable relationship of patronage wherein the politician is no longer just a source of news, but the journalist's patron. An elected or appointed official gives the journalist an envelope with cash or a regular allowance. In return, the reporter quotes him in reports or beams him on TV. The relationship, says Coronel, is hard to undo given existing conditions of low pay, especially for radio and tabloid reporters. But she notes, too, that society does not condemn this practice. "In many respects,

patronage is the glue that cements our fragmented society and politics altogether," she adds (Coronel 1991, 51).

These studies and reports, written in various years spanning decades, document the changing and changeless scenarios for Filipino reporters, particularly those working in small news outlets and in highly politicized localities like the *Mirror* in Davao City. The situation has changed in terms of how roles evolve alongside audience needs, but it has not changed, too, because the same problems that are political and economic in nature continue to beset local reporters.

Founded in the 1950s by couple Demetrio "Demet" T. Flaviano and Anita Jacela Flaviano, *Mindanao Daily Mirror* is one of the oldest newspapers in Mindanao (Figueroa 2009). Demet Flaviano was an English professor at the University of the East and Far Eastern University, while his wife Anita managed a family-owned bookstore in Manila's university belt. The couple moved to Davao City after realizing the area's business potential in the 1950s. There they started the *Mindanao Mirror* as a weekly paper with only six pages. As the *Mirror*'s circulation grew, its frequency likewise increased to thrice a week, which then became four times a week, and then six times weekly. Instead of putting out a seventh edition, Demet Flaviano, decided to put out the *Mindanao Mirror Bulletin*, every Sunday (*Edge Davao* 2014). Today, the *Mirror* is printed from Monday to Friday. Half of the copies printed daily are distributed in Davao City while the rest go to other parts of the region, including Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, Kidapawan City, Butuan City, Cotabato City, and General Santos City. It is also online via https://mindanaodailymirror.ph.

For the past six decades the paper remained a family business, owned by the Flavianos and then later managed by the founders' heirs. In late 2018, news about the paper being purchased by former presidential assistant Christopher Lawrence "Bong" T. Go began to circulate. Several sources say that the paper is indeed no longer owned by the Flavianos and that they too have heard of Go or an ally owning the paper now. The news came alongside a revamp of the paper's editorial structure, design, and an obvious focus on Go's activities as presidential assistant and now as senator. Go was Rodrigo R. Duterte's assistant since 1998 during his terms as Davao City mayor, vice mayor, and congressman and then as president in May 2016. But Go supposedly left his assistant post after winning in the senatorial polls in May 2019.

The researcher sent a formal request to the *Mirror* and Senator Go to verify the reports, but both parties have not responded as of this writing. On paper though, the *Mirror* is still owned and managed by six members of the Flaviano family—namely: Marietta F. Siongco, Teresita F. Basilio, Giovanni Flaviano, Angelita Ty Flaviano, Michael Edouard F. Galvez, and Shirley Ann Galvez-Dominguez, the *Mirror*'s 2018 general information sheet shows (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 2018).

Insights into how the *Mirror* thrives as a community paper in context of the interplay with local power holders may be taken from how it operates now in light of reports of the ownership change and how it used to cover the drug war in Davao City before Duterte became president. In the next two sections, we first focus on the narrative that the *Mirror* created about drug-related events in 1986, 1998, and 2009, and then we analyze the manner in which the paper reported this narrative.

The *Mirror*'s Narrative of the "War on Drugs" in Davao City

Duterte's Drug War in Davao City

As if following a formula, the nature of Duterte's "war on drugs" as president mimics the way it had been done in Davao City. The cast of characters and circumstances are not all the same, but the chain of events seems to be very familiar.

Drug-related killings were often preceded by humiliation through a list drawn up by the local Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), which was supposedly based on information supplied by city and village officials, police officers, and civilian volunteers. Known drug users and pushers as well as persons with criminal histories were supposedly included in the "order of battle" that would then be used as reference in police house visits. But even before these operations would be conducted, Duterte would have revealed the names on radio and TV (Reyes 2016). Fr. Amado L. Picardal, a human rights activist who helped document extrajudicial killings in Davao City, recounts that "many of those in the list were killed" (Pulido 2009, 4:18–4:37).

What appears to be the first record of vigilante killings in the city can be traced back to as early as 1993. A Philippine News Agency article published by the *Mirror* (PNA 1998b) reports that the killing of four persons in "separate liquidation missions" in September 1998 could be the handiwork of the vigilante group that had at the time "liquidated more than 100 persons with links to illegal drug trade since 1993 when

then mayor, now congressman Rodrigo Duterte, waged war against illegal drugs." But police officials would at several times discount the claim and say that the killings were purely due to personal grudges (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 1998a).

According to the same report, the vigilante group stopped operations months prior to the May 1998 elections "when everybody was busy campaigning and almost every suspected drug trafficker, either male or female, seemed to have been eliminated for good already." But after the May 1998 elections, drug traffickers who supposedly left the city during the heat of "vigilante" killings came back apparently to challenge the then newly elected Mayor Benjamin de Guzman, once described as "soft-spoken" by the paper.

Duterte was elected mayor of Davao City seven times. Serving the position for a total of 22 years, he has never lost an election. During his term, the so-called Davao Death Squad or DDS killed at least 1,400 persons or an average of five people per month. Not a single person was successfully prosecuted for any of these killings. Tagged as "the Death Squad mayor," Duterte has done little to deny the accusation. When he ran for president in 2016, he said, "Am I the Death Squad? Yes" (Fernquest and Johnson 2018).

Duterte was mayor of Davao City from 1992 to 1998. He then ran for Congress after completing three terms as mayor. From 1998 to 2001, Benjamin de Guzman, Duterte's vice mayor and former political ally, took over after winning over Prospero Nograles in the mayoral race.

Even with de Guzman at the helm, the city's antidrug campaign continued with arrests and pronouncements against drug users and pushers. In "Mayor Vows No Let-Up vs Crime" (Mellejor 1998a), de Guzman promised that there would be a "no let-up" campaign against crime as he commended the Davao City Police Office, then headed by Supt. Isidro Lapeña, for the early resolution of the killing of a police officer and a jeepney dispatcher. De Guzman ordered the manhunt against four suspects in the killings, saying that fighting crime is the "top-priority program of the city government with the support of the police and the civilian populace."

The front-page story was accompanied by a photo of de Guzman and Lapeña along with the caption "HARD AT WORK. Mayor Benjamin de Guzman instructs police director Supt. Isidro Lapeña to step up the fight against crime." De Guzman and Lapeña would appear in subsequent photos of drug arrests in the *Mirror*'s front pages. (When

Duterte became president, Lapeña was appointed PDEA chief, then Bureau of Customs chief, then Technical Education and Skills Development Authority head.)

Duterte meanwhile brought his crusade against illegal drugs to Congress by proposing amendments to Republic Act No. 6425 or the "Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972." In "Duterte Wants Drugs Law Revised" (Mellejor 1998b), Duterte said he wants all drug arrests nonbailable while all drug-related crimes reclassified as heinous. The newly elected congressman also wanted to strengthen the country's police organization and police commission. (Republic Act [RA] 6425 was later repealed by RA 9165 or the "Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.")

The report likewise noted that Duterte vowed that he would not stop his fight against drugs for the people of Davao City. But he added that he was confident that Mayor de Guzman "can equally do his best for the peace and stability of the city" (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 1998a).

As Davao representative, Duterte continued serving the Regional Peace and Order Council as its chair, a post he has held for nine years at the time. In "No Let-up in Drive vs. Drugs—Duterte," Duterte warned drug pushers that the campaign against illegal drugs "will remain relentless until the city's drug problems are eradicated." Duterte's warning came on the heels of intelligence reports that a suspected drug pusher was allegedly trying to activate his illegal trade in the city (Mellejor 1998c).

Duterte's proposal to make the illegal drugs law stricter was echoed by then Police Superintendent Rolando Abutay of the Narcotics Command 12, who in one August 1998 *Mirror* report, said that he favors the "no bail bond" recommendation for drug pushing in order to curb the drug problem (PNA 1998a). Abutay said drug pushers were taking advantage of the limitations of the law, which stipulates that drug pushing below 200 grams of any form of prohibited drugs is bailable while drug pushing 200 grams and above is punishable by death.

Abutay reasoned that the typical apprehension of drugs in Davao City ranges from 15 to 30 grams only, which is bailable, but the transaction happens daily, he said. While there are cases of big-time apprehensions, he said suspected pushers usually fight back, resulting in shootouts. He said this was happening because pushers are aware of the legal loophole (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 1998a).

In November 1998, Senator Robert Barbers also recommended that no bail must be recommended even for the possession of only 15 grams of illegal drugs. In "Drug Pushers Must Not Be Bailable–Barbers," the former interior and local government secretary said he filed a bill amending the law which provides that no bail be allowed for having 200 grams of shabu (PNA 1998c). In the bill, he lowered the quantity of shabu to only 15 grams, disallowing any person from being given any bail bond for the crime (PNA 1998c).

Apart from the Regional Peace and Order Council and Narcotics Command 12, several other groups and campaigns were also created for the antidrug campaign:

- Special Operations Group (SOG), an elite unit of the Davao City Police Office;
- Special Mayor's Anti-Crime Response Team (SMART), another special unit in the Davao City Police Office created by Mayor Benjamin de Guzman to provide an avenue for people's complaints;
- Regional Anti-Narcotics Office (RANO); and
- Barangay Opisyal at Pulisya Laban sa Druga, a campaign formed by the National Police Commission and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

In the 2001 elections, de Guzman broke away from Duterte's party and challenged the latter's bid for mayor. But Duterte defeated de Guzman and went on to complete another three straight terms from 2001 to 2010. In 2010, Duterte endorsed his daughter, Sara, who won and took over as mayor while he served as vice mayor. Duterte was barred from running as mayor in 2010, as he had just completed his three terms. In 2013, Duterte was elected mayor again before becoming president in 2016.

By 2009, drug-related killings would be recorded at 800 since 1998 (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 2009c). From 1998 to 2015, a total of 1,424 cases of killings were recorded by the Coalition Against Summary Execution (CASE), a group that documented cases of human rights violations, particularly the summary executions of civilians, including children (Reyes 2016). In 2012, the CHR's investigation into the killings in Davao City from 2005 to 2009 shows the deadly operations were a "systematic practice . . . attributed or attributable to the Davao

Death Squad" (CHR 2012, 2). Edgar Matobato, a self-confessed DDS member, later corroborated the commission's findings and claimed the death squad had killed "more than a thousand individuals from 1988 to 2013" on the orders of Duterte (Gonzales 2016). Indeed, Davao City had become Duterte's laboratory for killing, a template, a political model for his brand of governance now replicated on a national scale (Miller 2018).

Joseph Estrada's and Gloria Arroyo's "War on Drugs"

Duterte's antidrug campaign in Davao City, along with the trail of deaths known to be the work of the Davao Death Squad, was happening in parallel with well-funded anticrime efforts at the national level led by former presidents Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Both presidents also looked up to Duterte's style of governance that they, at one point during their respective terms, offered cabinet posts to Duterte (see for example *Philippine Star* 2002). In line with each administration's stance against crime, several other local officials, cabinet members, and legislators were also then making strong pronouncements against illegal drugs for the most part of Duterte's rule as mayor. These were also all printed in the *Mirror*. It is crucial to note, however, that none of these officials outside of Davao City openly endorsed the killing of criminals or publicly targeted or threatened individuals for assassination.

Crime stories at the time did gain prominence during Estrada's abbreviated term (1998–2001) and Arroyo's nine-year run (2001–2010) with the execution of Leo Echegaray who was convicted of raping his 10-year-old stepdaughter and the arrest and later acquittal of the Alabang Boys who were prosecuted for allegedly dealing drugs in Ayala Alabang, an upscale village in Muntinlupa City (Bernal 2014).

Estrada's tough stance on criminals did not fall on deaf ears in Davao City. In "Lapeña Warns Drug Pushers to Stay Out" (Josol 1998c), the former city police director told drug pushers not to "challenge" the police. Lapeña was supposedly echoing the words of the newly elected president, who gave a similar warning against criminals in his inaugural speech.

Confirming that drug dealers have resumed activities in the city, supposedly to test the leadership of Mayor Benjamin de Guzman, Lapeña said that the "full force of the law" would be applied to pushers if they would persist in dealing drugs. He also vowed "to crush the illegal drug trade" as he beefed up police intelligence.

As if channeling his inner Duterte, Lapeña went on to make a threat: "It's up to them (drug pushers) if they want to operate again in the city. *Baka magsisi rin sila sa bandang huli* (They might regret their actions in the end)." "Our effort right now is to eliminate them. The proliferation of illegal drugs will be contained soon," he added (Josol 1998a; see also Josol 1998b).

By January 1999, the Philippine National Police (PNP) under Estrada officially shifted its anticrime efforts to the narcotics trade. In "Drugs Now PNP's Number One Problem" (Mundiz, 1999), Davao Regional Police Director Chief Supt. Nicolas Olarte said drugs emerged as the police's top concern during a command conference held at the start of the year. PNP's new thrust, he said, was in line with Estrada's vow to protect the youth against the "drug menace."

On January 15, 1999, a "massive nationwide antidrug campaign" was launched upon the orders of Estrada. Congress then had also set aside PHP 500 million to fund the campaign. In "PNP Turns Sights on Drug Trade" (AFP 1999), police statistics showed that 1.2 million young Filipinos—or seven out of 100 young people—were hooked on drugs, of which 95 percent use the stimulant methamphetamine hydrochloride or "ice." Police also seized 73 tons of "ice" worth PHP 274 million in 1998, placing the Philippines second to China among Asian countries with the highest volume of drugs seized annually.

A week later, on January 23, Estrada began offering a cash reward to the regional police command that will achieve the best record in dealing with the "scourge." In "Cash for Best Anti-drugs Unit" (PNA 1999) then Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force (PAOCTF) Chief Panfilo Lacson said the president already gave a bonus of PHP 500,000 to General Reynaldo Acop of the Southern Tagalog Command for being the top regional performer in fighting the illegal drug trade. Lacson said Estrada will give the same amount to the next best performing region.

The Estrada administration, at the time, had adopted a two-pronged approach against drugs, with the PNP going after street-level trafficking and the PAOCTF tracking big-time dealers. The president also created the National Drug Law Enforcement Prevention and Coordination Center to coordinate all government efforts against the narcotics trade. Estrada chaired the body in his capacity as concurrent secretary of the DILG while then PNP Chief Deputy Director General Robert Lastimoso served as vice chairman. Apart from the PNP and

PAOCTF, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) were also part of the center.

A decade later, in January 2009, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo will act as the government's "antidrug czar" in the wake of the Alabang Boys controversy. Arroyo, at the time, ordered Department of Justice (DOJ) officials implicated in the alleged bribery in the Alabang Boys mess to go on leave.

"I will temporarily act as the czar, or overseer, of the war against illegal drugs," Arroyo said as she ordered an "all-out war, an unyielding and unrelenting war against illegal drugs and their devil merchants." "Then, I will turn over the job to the tandem [of] Tito Sotto and Jionex Santiago." Vicente "Tito" Sotto III was then chair of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) while Jionex or Dionisio Santiago was PDEA director general (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 2009a).

Arroyo said the controversy regarding the young drug suspects Richard Brodett, Jorge Jordana Joseph, and Joseph Tecson, collectively known as the Alabang Boys, should serve a lesson to all sectors to intensify the war against illegal drug use. She thus called on the academe, church groups, and nongovernment organizations "to intensify the campaign against illegal drugs" (Sisante 2009).

The president also proposed a "trinity against illegal drugs" as she called on local government units to declare themselves as "drug-free zones" (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 2009a). Drug-free zones will then be granted funding for projects promoting the welfare of the youth (Sisante 2009).

Arroyo further said that "the war shall be waged from three fronts," referring to the "trinity against illegal drugs" composed of law enforcement, judicial action, and policy making.

Ousted president Joseph Estrada, who was convicted of plunder, would later be granted pardon by Arroyo. He has since made multiple pronouncements supporting President Duterte's "war on drugs" (Mangunay 2016; Abanilla 2018).

Arroyo, who was prosecuted for election fraud and fund misuse, currently sits as speaker of the House of Representatives. She and President Duterte are known allies.

The *Mirror*'s Coverage of Drug-Related Events in Davao City

To determine the manner in which the *Mirror* covered the "war on drugs" in Davao City, the researchers coded the 256 articles gathered and consulted a statistician to validate the data. The data were clustered

into two parts: (1) treatment of the article using variables such as the subject of the story, number of sources, type of sources, and placement in the newspaper; and (2) type of reporting which was classified as either conventional or contextual.

As expected, the results of the analysis show that the type of reporting employed by the *Mirror* leaned more on the conventional rather than the contextual as majority of the articles relied on single and official sources whose direct quotes made up majority of the articles and focused largely on local police activities and the mayor's pronouncements to fight the illegal drug trade in the city.

Subject

Among the eight subject categories identified, general reports about illegal drugs comprised majority of the articles with 38 percent of the total number or 103 articles. These stories were about the local and national government's antidrug activities, including local and national officials' announcements, agency plans and programs, and amendments to make the Dangerous Drugs Act stricter. Local drug stories were complemented by stories about efforts to fight drugs at the national level.

Next to these general reports are stories about drug arrests (63 articles or 23 percent), followed by investigations and court proceedings once cases are filed against the suspects (37 articles or 14 percent). Various articles about drug killings, drug case investigations, victim's and/or victim's family story, crime reports, and other topics were the subject of the rest of the reportage (25 percent). The results also show that of the 256 articles gathered from the three years, 134 articles (52 percent) were placed on the front page while 122 articles (48 percent) were placed in the inside pages.

The killings of drug suspects in police operations became a staple in the news when Duterte became president, but there were few of these reports in the *Mirror*, at least in the years 1986, 1998, and 2009. In fact, from May to December 1986, only one story about illegal drugs (marijuana) was found. In the succeeding years, suspects reported to be involved in shootouts were not killed; they suffered injuries and were usually brought to the Davao Medical Center. While there were reports of DDS-linked deaths, these did not comprise majority of the news reports either, presumably because 1998 was an election year and 2009 was the year when the CHR initiated its investigation on the summary killings happening in the city. Election years are reportedly

the time when the DDS would slow down. It should be noted, however, that at least 1,400 people have been documented as murdered by the vigilante group from at least 1998 to 2015.

Notable too are stories about murder, rape, and corruption leading the front pages of the *Mirror*. These reports involved civilians, government officials, as well as cops or former police officers being implicated in various crimes. Drug-related stories happening in other countries such as Thailand, China, and Mexico, among others, were also published by the *Mirror*, apparently giving the impression that the illegal drug trade was not just a local and national concern but a worldwide problem.

The subject category given the least prominence by the *Mirror* are stories about the slain victims of the DDS and their families. Before the CHR inquiry in 2009, there were also too few stories of resistance or criticism or even an analysis of the local government's antidrug campaign or the extrajudicial killings taking place in the city.

One such story did come out on May 6, 1998, a few days before the elections. Titled "DDS Victims' Kin Want Duterte Jailed" (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 1998b), the report started with a paragraph about the relatives of about fifty victims of the vigilante group banding together to plan legal actions against Duterte and unnamed police officials whom they accused as behind the murders. But the victims' story stops there. The rest of the article goes on to discuss how the move is being orchestrated by a political opponent of Duterte. The information supposedly came from anonymous "sources from a government antidrug agency" who informed the *Mirror* that the politician on several occasions met with the victims' kin and promised them full support for the legal action on the condition that they support his candidacy.

In verbatim, the *Mirror* included a direct quote from the unidentified political opponent as it was supposedly communicated to the families. "Vote for me and I will help you file the case to bring Duterte to jail for these senseless killings," the politician reportedly told the relatives in secret meetings in January and February 1998. The story noted that the relatives since then were "working hard for the candidacy of the politician."

According to the report, too, the Davao Death Squad waged a killing spree at the same time Duterte announced in 1997 that he would "eliminate drug pushers and drug lords." About fifty suspected drug merchants were murdered around this time. The article likewise

noted that it was rumored that the DDS is under orders of the city hall and local antidrug law enforcement agencies.

Duterte and the police had, on several occasions, denied any role in the killings, saying that the vigilantes could be relatives of the victims of drug addicts who were exacting revenge on drug peddlers.

Verification of the information presented in the entire report should have been done, especially since the story was published a few days before the May 1998 elections. The story relied heavily on unnamed government sources; no reason was provided either as to why anonymity was granted. Corroboration was not also done with the victims' families who were essentially accused of conspiring with the politician. Even the side of Duterte and the police, who were the main subjects of the allegations, were not taken. It is interesting to note, too, that this particular story was published without credit; no reporter was named as author of the article yet it appeared on the *Mirror*'s front page.

Comment from the Davao City Mayor's Office would come the following day, on May 7, in "Drug Lords, Bet Suspected Behind Plot to Jail RRD for DDS Killings" (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 1998c)." Like the previous day's story, the follow-up article was published without an author.

In the front-page report, Mayor Benjamin de Guzman said that a political rival could be using money from drug lords to fund his campaign. Anonymous antinarcotics agents were also quoted as saying that millions of pesos in drug money could have already been funneled to the election campaign of the politician to defeat Duterte and de Guzman. "Politicians who honeymoon with drug lords are themselves drug lords," de Guzman said, pointing out that while the main target of the planned legal suit is Duterte, drug lords would support the politicians running for the top elective post so that they will have a "powerful coddler." According to the report, Duterte "had put a stop to the lucrative drug trade in the city" while de Guzman vowed that he will "treat drug lords as they were treated under Duterte's strong-arm policy on drug peddling." De Guzman declined to identify the politician, but the article hinted that they could be former congressman Prospero Nograles or retired colonel Ernesto Macasaet, who were then both running for mayor in the May 1998 elections.

The article also cited another unnamed agent who claimed that the politician "could be lawyering for some big-time drug peddler." "If this is true that a politician is behind this, this will be a big blow to our antidrug campaign," the anonymous source said. The victims' story

turned out to be a political one, which ultimately became a one-sided report in favor of the officials in position.

Sourcing

Throughout the three years covered in the study, the *Mirror* paid an inordinate focus on single and "official" sources in reporting drug-related stories. More than 60 percent of the reports reviewed had single sources, while 90 percent of the same set of articles used government officials as key sources. Most of these sources included former Davao City Mayors Rodrigo Duterte and Benjamin de Guzman, Superintendents Isidro Lapeña and Rogelio Dy of the Davao City Police Office, and various officials representing the regional police and various antinarcotics groups. Duterte, de Guzman, and Lapeña also graced the front pages of the *Mirror*, often with drug suspects arrested during police operations.

Information from these go-to sources typically went unchallenged, such as when de Guzman, in the March 22, 1998, report "Mayor Vows No Let-up vs Crime" (Mellejor 1998a), said that fighting crime was the "top priority program of the city government with the support of the police and the civilian populace." The former mayor's claim to speak on behalf of the people was not verified. By standard, journalists need to ask their sources where and how they get their information. In this case, an obvious question would have been how de Guzman knew what people wanted and whether he can cite polls or studies to support his statement.

The same is true for reports in which Duterte and Lapeña dismissed their supposed links to the Davao Death Squad and instead turned the blame on victims' kin whom they claimed are the ones responsible for the killings to exact revenge on drug pushers. How Duterte and Lapeña got to this conclusion was never explored.

For the most part of the 1998 coverage of the "drug war" in the city, comments from other people involved in the stories were not included. If they were ever interviewed, these would often appear in the next day's issue.

Type of Reporting

Because stories had only one source or one set of government sources, the reports were written in a straight news format or conventional type of reporting, which usually answers only the "who-what-when-where-why." There were no in-depth drug-related stories published in the three years covered.

Conventional stories often inform the public about the official activities of government such as lawmaking and politics, but also public safety, including court prosecutions, police crime reports, and responses to fires and natural disasters. Three features stand out in a conventional story such that (1) it identifies its subjects clearly and promptly, and that it tends to be written in the "inverted pyramid" style, with answers to "who-what-where-when" in the lead paragraph; (2) it describes activities that have occurred or will occur within 24 hours; and (3) it focuses on one-time activities or actions, i.e., planned events, such as public meetings as well as unplanned actions like natural disasters (Fink and Schudson 2013).

Contextual stories, meanwhile, tend to focus on the big picture, providing context for other news reports. Often explanatory in nature, contextual stories are often written in the present tense because they describe processes or activities that are ongoing rather than events that have been both initiated and completed. They may also be written in the past tense if the purpose is to give historical context. Contextual stories may also be explanatory in the sense that that they help readers better understand complicated issues. This kind of reporting may be in the form of trend stories, using numerical data that show change over time on matters of public interest (Fink and Schudson 2013).

Nearly 40 percent of the reports reviewed used data or documentary sources. But it is important to note that these records mostly came from government agencies such as the PNP and DDB, officials, or antidrug groups. Asking how these sources were gathered and vetting their data did not seem to be routine in the *Mirror* reporting as well.

For instance, in the February 8, 1999, story titled "Herrera: To Declog Death Row, Go After Drug Ring" (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 1999), then Bohol representative and former senator Ernesto Herrera said that the Leo Echegaray case could have been avoided if the government "bored down hard" against the illegal drug trade. He then cited "informed estimates" that "around 76 percent of convicts now on death row were involved in illegal drugs in one way or another." Echegaray was executed by lethal injection on February 5, 1999, for raping his ten-year-old stepdaughter. Herrera was one of the main sponsors of the death penalty bill when he was senator. In the report, Herrera also cited data from studies done by the Citizens Drugwatch Foundation, which supposedly found that "most of the 801 convicts on death row were reported to be high on drugs when they committed

the crimes." Information about how both sets of data were gathered was not included in the report.

Similar to the early part of the media coverage of President Duterte's "war on drugs," reporting on drugs and drug-related deaths by the numbers was also a hallmark of the media coverage of the drug war in Davao City. The articles did not delve much—or at all—on the stories behind the numbers.

Drug users most often emerge in the news if it is related to crime, community fear, or revelations about drug use, particularly among the youth. There is very little awareness of the interrelatedness of drug issues and other medical and health issues, and social issues, in news media coverage (Blood and McCallum 2005).

In framing drug-related issues, the news media usually convey the negative characteristics of drugs users and drug pushers. They emphasize how drugs lead to the destruction of the society. Journalists thus tend to amplify antidrug campaigns of the government to draw collective support from the community and the society at large against drug use and drug-related crimes. It shapes a society that has a common goal and that is to eliminate drugs and its harmful effects (Gecer and Mahinay 2018).

The *Mirror's* coverage of illegal drugs in 1986, 1998, and 2009 almost perfectly fits this depiction of the news media when reporting on drug users in at least 39 articles described in a negative light. In majority of the stories reviewed in this research, the *Mirror* appeared to subscribe to Duterte's approach in fighting drugs to the extent that in its editorial dated July 23, 2009, three months after the CHR inquiry, the *Mirror* wrote:

> The war against drugs should have been mounted a long time ago. There has surely never been a lack of victims, for every single day, illegal drugs damage hundreds of people and their families. Many deaths and injuries are directly attributable to substances that control the mind and make criminals out of otherwise peaceful citizens. And how many women and children have been abused by drug-crazed men? They have all been crying out for justice for a long time, but government has been only half-serious in dealing with the problem. But now a war has been declared, and while it was based on faulty information, it should still be pursued with all earnestness . . . . It is also important to remember that the war involves all of us, and that our participation—from simply not using drugs to being vigilant and report those who are dealing them—is vital in winning. This is too important to leave to the

> authorities alone; we are all, in a very real sense, soldiers in this war. (*Mindanao Daily Mirror* 2009b)

In Focus: Duterte Faces the CHR

The reporting in 2009 indicated somewhat of a tide change in the *Mirror*'s narrative of the drug war mainly because a formal investigation into the Davao Death Squad by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) was underway. The three-day inquiry triggered a variation in the kind of story being told, the kind that very unusually placed Duterte in the hot seat opposite CHR Chair Leila de Lima, who was grilling him. But a closer look at the articles put out by the *Mirror* during those days also included counter-narratives that challenge the CHR inquiry.

In the March 31, 2009, front-page story "What Peace? What Order? CHR Chair de Lima Asks" (Arguillas 2009), journalist Carolyn O. Arguillas of *MindaNews* wrote perhaps one of the lengthiest articles published by the *Mirror*. (Arguillas was and is not a *Mirror* reporter. The *Mirror* published a *MindaNews* report about the CHR investigation.) The story tackled the meat of exchanges between de Lima and Dutere in the inquiry, zeroing in on de Lima challenging the supposed peace and order claim and low crime rate in Davao City all while suspected criminals were being slain. De Lima likewise interrogated Duterte on why the killings have not been solved. In fact, the same March 31, 2009 issue and the following day's April 1, 2009 edition carried reports of people being gunned down vigilante style. In true Duterte fashion, the mayor threatened to resign if proven that the killings were state-sponsored.

But it is crucial to note that Arguillas's story appeared alongside another *Mirror* story which seemed like it was written in defense of Duterte. In "Duterte Assumes Full Responsibility for Killings" (Caduaya 2009a), a *Mirror* reporter, wrote about how it was actually the mayor who asked both the CHR and NBI to conduct an investigation into the killings. Both *MindaNews*' and the *Mirror*'s stories were placed on the front page, but the *Mirror* piece was the banner story; below it was the *MindaNews* report.

In the March 31, 2009 issue, in light of the CHR inquiry, the *Mirror* also published an editorial titled "Public Hearing" that condemned the summary killings: "There is no place in civilized society for the summary killing of even the vilest of criminals; each person

deserves due process, and to accept their being killed unceremoniously in the streets is to dehumanize not just the victims but also the entire community. A city that accepts summary killings as a method of maintaining peace and enforcing justice will soon find itself having neither peace nor justice."

The message was clear—that killings of any kind must not be condoned—but the *Mirror* did not describe Duterte as a subject of the inquiry or that he is being linked with the DDS. Instead he was written as a government leader who was invited to shed light on the issue.

The editorial also took a swipe at the "so-called civil society" who only condemns the killings when they "come too often and too close to each for comfort." It also cast doubt on whether the inquiry would do any good because witnesses, it said, would be discouraged to come forward if there is a general belief that the killings were state-sponsored.

The following day, on April 1, 2009, the *Mirror*'s banner headline read: "Duterte Gives Up Control over Police" (Caduaya 2009b). Duterte resigned as supervisor of the Davao City Police and Task Force Davao supposedly to give CHR "a free hand" in its investigation of the unsolved killings in the city.

On page eight of the same issue, the *Mirror* reported that Nograles ordered the House of Representatives to probe the Davao City killings. The then House speaker said that the summary killings were "an international embarrassment," as it became the subject of Philip Alston's report. Alston was the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions.

The CHR investigation also paved the way for the *Mirror* to follow up and print other stories such as the Human Rights Watch report about how the killings may be state-sponsored and a report about a barangay official saying that the killings have no public approval.

But stories like "DCCCII Exec Backs Duterte" (Alama 2009) and "Is There Basis for CHR Probe?" (PNA 2009b) also came out. In the first story, Davao City businessmen were reported as standing by Duterte in the midst of the CHR investigation. Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (DCCCII) President Simeon Marfori Jr. says that he has seen the dark days of Davao before Duterte became mayor. "Those were the times of the Alsa Masa and when policemen were gunned down in broad daylight . . . Our generation remembered those times," Marfori said, adding that he believed Duterte was principally responsible in cleaning up the city and that it was enjoying the fruits of his efforts. Lawyer Nonoy Villa-Abarille, another Davao

businessman, said in the same article that de Lima should have seen Davao City in the 1980s in order to appreciate what the absence of peace and order means to Davaoeños.

The stories published after the CHR inquiry largely leaned in support of Duterte, from clearing his name in the killings in "CHR Admits: Nothing Links Duterte to Summary Killings" (Caduaya 2009c), "Activist Says CHR Erred in DDS Probe" (Caduaya 2009e), and "CHR Admits Singling Out Davao City on Killings" (Suelto 2009) to stories that put blame on the CHR investigation in "Crimes on the Rise as Duterte Goes on Leave" (Caduaya 2009d) and "CHR Probe Worsened Crime in Barangay 76-A: Olanolan" (Padillo 2009), among other reports. All these came out in the same year when then President Gloria Arroyo was waging her own drug war.

It can be observed, too, that because the *Mirror* still relied heavily on government sources, the stories tended to shift toward the political side of things—again about the heightened rivalry between Rodrigo Duterte and Prospero Nograles—and not so much about the victims or how the investigation will move forward. Reports about the CHR inquiry were soon followed with articles about then House Speaker Nograles initiating a twin investigation in the House of Representatives and his son Karlo, who had his own radio program, criticizing Duterte and the summary killings (PNA 2009c).

Duterte and Davao Media

Senior journalists and media experts say that tracing events taking place inside and outside of Davao City vis-à-vis the state of the community press there, from the economic conditions of reporters and sustainability issues hounding newspapers up to the interests of owners and political actors, is needed to fully comprehend why local papers like the *Mirror* covered drug-related events and Duterte the way it did.

A former Davao-based journalist says it would be difficult to understand how the media there operated if only the Western-inspired view of how reporting should be done is used as a filter. While he does subscribe to these journalism ideals, he says the complexity of the situation in the city must be factored in to appreciate and also learn from how newspapers like the *Mirror* thrives in Davao City.

The Duterte Legend and the So-called Miracle of Davao

The journalist says that if a newspaper's coverage points to signs that might be seen as accepting of Duterte's "war on drugs," it could be because these long-running publications, including the *Mirror*, have seen the city at its worst and its best. Founded in the 1950s by the Flaviano couple, the *Mirror* is one of the oldest newspapers in Davao, as majority of the dailies and online news outlets based in the city now were formed in the last two decades.

Editors of media outlets then had seen the transformation of Davao from a city that was almost on the brink of breaking down into a much stable and vibrant city. Once a peaceful enclave, Davao City became synonymous with violence in the 1980s. Recalls the journalist, violence was all that people read in newspapers every day back then. The situation was so grave that the journalist could not go out at night as a child then. "We're always warned that 'if you'll be late going home, better not go home, stay where you are,'" he says. This was the time when children were supposedly abducted in the streets.

In the 1990s, investments came in to Davao City. Flights increased. Buildings were sprouting here and there. People can already walk down the streets. But then it was also in this decade when reports about extrajudicial killings rose. The journalist says the media kept reporting about the killings while the police could not give any clear explanation. But he notes that the killings at that time were all happening within the context of a city that had just gone through a very violent history. So it was like inertia, he says, that people can live with the killings.

Another journalist who has observed developments in Davao City says it is hard to simplify media coverage then because, in her observation, people really believed in Duterte as the city became progressive economically. With the city's stability came support for Duterte's hardline stance on crime.

The problem with many Filipinos, she says, is its psyche. "Unless he or she is directly affected, he or she won't care. So if the view is the death squad is controlling crime and it doesn't affect you, 'OK *lang, gets ko*, Death Squad '*yan*,'" she says.

Of note, too, is the fact that during Duterte's term as Davao City mayor, he was consistently sought out by whoever sat in Malacañang for his anticrime efforts. The general positioning of the media in Davao City at that time was not surprising, and neither was it an isolated position. It is a position shared by many, including institutions and

past presidents. In the late 1980s, when Corazon Aquino was president, there were bombings in Davao City and elsewhere, so it was par for course when the drug killings happened in the 1990s. A journalist says violence carried on although the difference was that it was the supposed criminals who were largely being killed this time.

As narrated above, a "war on drugs" at the national level was also implemented by every administration, running in parallel with Duterte's local drug war. None of these presidents, however, explicitly endorsed the killing of criminals. But except for a few media outlets like *The Mindanao Times* and *SunStar,* which monitored and counted the killings for a time, international groups, and the CHR at one point, not many took a serious look at the killings in Davao City. It can be surmised that the media's failure to cast a critical eye on Duterte's drug war was compounded by other institutions also failing to investigate and hold actors to account.

A Davao-based journalist points out that while it is true that the media had problems, government officials at the national level, the presidents in particular, tolerated Duterte. "It's not fair to just put the blame on the people of Davao because it's not just Davao that made Digong," she says. The reason why Duterte became Duterte, she explains, is precisely because all the presidents, from Corazon Aquino to Benigno Simeon Aquino III, did not want to touch him. She notes that when the CHR investigated Duterte in 2009, the term used was not even "investigate." The word commonly used in the reports that came out then then was "inquiry." "You're talking of one million votes, that's why 'he's a son of a bitch but he's our son of a bitch,'" she says, adding that the situation was like the case of the Ampatuan family that ruled Maguindanao for a time. The Ampatuan brothers, namely Datu Andal Ampatuan Jr. and Zaldy Ampatuan were convicted of fifty-seven counts of murder and sentenced to *reclusion perpetua* without parole for the massacre of fifty-eight people on November 23, 2009, where thirty-two who died were journalists (Buan 2014).

All through those years in Davao City, the media's generally uncritical reportage helped create the legend of Duterte. One journalist says that because there has not been any strong case filed against the president, he has never tried to dispel the accusations or really clear his name. In fact, the summary killings even contributed to the mythmaking—the Duterte legend. It worked to his favor, he says.

At the time, there would always be talks about Duterte running for the senate every elections because of the supposed "miracle of Davao."

By then, Duterte had already created a sort of a legend, a myth for himself, in dealing with the peace and security situation in the city. The way it was viewed in Davao City, Duterte's way of governance stopped the wanton violence that was once rampant there, but this was, of course, replaced with violence, too—the kind that targeted alleged criminals. The public, then, seemed to have accepted what was going on, he says.

Everyone else is guilty, says a former Davao-based journalist, noting that politicians during campaigns would always align themselves with Duterte because he's very popular and can carry the votes. Presidential candidates courted him and the Dutertes always delivered.

The journalist says he is not surprised that papers like the *Mirror* covered Duterte's anticrime stance the way it did, as evidenced by the findings in this paper. He cannot say that these newspapers supported it, but there was acceptance. Many reporters "need not be bought" because they personally subscribed to the kind of governance that Duterte executed. In his observation, most people in the community press subscribe to the leadership, pointing out that while critical discussions sometimes can be made in community papers, it is not the space wherein one can always be critical. "It's a community, right? It's not a gladiator's arena," he points out.

A Visayas-based community journalist who has been working for more than two decades says that community journalism, by practice, is very local, which has both good and bad sides. The community press, radio especially, is important during natural disasters when people need an instant source of information or if they cannot get access from other platforms. But largely, the community press's agenda, he says, is mainly focused on current and breaking news. In the run-up to or during an election, the reporting is concentrated on political talk, intrigues, gossip, and "he-said, she-said" stories.

Often, the critical view depends on the dominating political party, which heavily influences the slant of reporters and opinion of commentators. There is no "critical" reporting from a true journalistic point of view, the journalist says, while pointing out that being "critical" has been confined to bombastic radio commentaries bereft of research or contextual reporting or the occasional newspaper columns written by paid hacks. "If Manila-based outlets are Manila-centric, reflecting an imperial point of view, the local press also has its own arrogance and barriotic mentality, seemingly immune to change, resistant to improvement," he says.

Economic Pressures

To be sure, significant contributions by the community press have been documented in the case of the *Panguil Bay Monitor* in Ozamis City (Rimban 1999; Florentino-Hofileña 2001), *SunStar* in Cebu (Chua 1999), and *MindaNews* in Davao City (De Jesus 2015), but old issues of limited resources, journalists' cooptation with sources, and media corruption linger (Rimban 1999; Florentino-Hofileña 2001 and 2004).

A veteran journalist says it is typical in the reporting of many news outlets across the country for police stories to be written the way they have been written for many years—the fill-in-the-blanks kind of reporting. In this kind of reporting, reporters and even desk editors tend to accept what the police or authorities tell them and report it as such. The two-source rule is not exactly the practice in a situation where five to six stories are expected of a reporter, says another journalist. Small community papers do not have full-time reporters. Nearly all the reporters in Davao then work part-time except perhaps those who write for *The Mindanao Times*, he says.

The Mindanao Times, another early postwar paper, is published by Jesus "Jess" Dureza who served government in various capacities such as as Davao City representative, press secretary of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and more recently, as peace adviser to President Rodrigo R. Duterte. *Mindanao Daily Mirror* and *The Mindanao Times* are two of the longest running publications in the region. But to many observers of the media in Davao City, *The Mindanao Times*, despite its link to Dureza, has had a tradition of independence.

Because newspaper reporters work part-time, they have other jobs, too, such as radio reporters while some even moonlight as the media person of a politician or a candidate. They do public relations work to make ends meet. As wrong as this sounds, this is actually the situation that makes a community paper survive, says another journalist.

At least three community journalists interviewed for this paper say that until today, it is common practice for journalists to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. One journalist who works for both print and radio says she earns PHP 300 for a story or a photo in the inside pages of a regional paper. The amount goes up to PHP 350 if the story or photo is used in the banner. She estimates that the salary of a print reporter would be around PHP 10,000. She once heard that an editor-in-chief in a Mindanao newspaper earned PHP 19,000 monthly. While

she is able to make ends meet for her family, she wishes that things would be better, as there are cases when newspapers do not pay on time or do not pay at all.

A community journalist based in the Visayas meanwhile says he used to work without pay for at least six months for a radio station, then worked for minimal pay for a local paper. He only received above-standard pay when he worked in a noncommunity news outlets, the ones based in Metro Manila.

Hiring part-time reporters has both advantages and disadvantages. The only good thing, he says, is that it affords a wide reach for a news outlet in gathering information. On the other hand, editorial integrity of part-timers might be in question, as some can be unqualified or untrained. The journalist says he knows of correspondents who are in the payroll of local government units, congressmen, and even the military. They also get little to no protection against libel or physical attacks. Legal defense is mostly shouldered by the journalist or his or her political *padrino* (godfather or patron).

MMUM

Economic pressures can make journalists vulnerable to political patronage as in the case of Davao City where some have been known to enjoy the privilege of subscribing to the dispensation of advertisements, access, and favors offered by local power holders. In fact, there is an expression borne out of the habit of some Davao City reporters who follow then Mayor Rodrigo R. Duterte wherever he goes: "Mayor, Mayor, *uban mi* (I would go with you)" or MMUM for short. MMUM or tagging along with Duterte meant that these reporters were going to be fed or be "taken care of" by the former local chief executive.

Journalists interviewed by the researcher for this paper say that it is no secret that some Davao City reporters have been known to receive tokens of appreciation in exchange of a good coverage. These tokens come in the form of food, cash, advertisements, and even jobs. The arrangement has been embedded in the practice of journalism that one veteran journalist says that when Duterte talks about corruption in the media, he knows it too well because that was how he treated the media in Davao City.

Another veteran journalist says there are some reporters in Davao City who apply the journalistic approach to reporting—those who try to get all sides, get as many voices as possible to tell stories, and those

who ask the hard questions. But then, he says, there are those who cover Duterte as if he is God or newspapers whose sensibilities tend to favor Duterte's policies.

This scenario is not unique to Davao City. Elsewhere in the country, a similar relationship manifests between some reporters and politicians. "A lot of media survive because they patronize the mayor or congressman," a journalist says. For example, a mayor or congressman can provide advertisements through the local government unit (often the biggest employer in a city or town) or influence businesses in placing or not placing ads in a newspaper. During elections, the placement of political ads comes with a reporter's access to sorties and events, which later becomes news content. This power, the journalist says, makes newspapers dependent on whoever is "up there" or who has resources.

To illustrate how dependent a reporter can be on politicians, another journalist says that, in one instance, he's been told that a mayor's kitchen can become an extension of a reporter's kitchen, a place where a reporter's children can go and eat. There is also another anecdote of Duterte helping out a reporter when a family member got sick.

"How do you cast a critical eye?" he asks. "It might be easy to say that one has to remain independent but you are talking with an empty stomach, and not just the journalist's stomach but also his children's."

At least four journalists say that Duterte has been known to dole out jobs while he was mayor and even when he became president. One journalist says he knows of at least five reporters who have taken on government posts in Davao City and Malacañang. Another journalist describes the practice as such: if the mayor is no longer the elected leader, the reporters will exit government and go back to private practice until the mayor that they are favoring is back in office. In Duterte's case, he says he has his own set of reporters that support him while Sara, the daughter who took over as mayor when Duterte became president, has her own.

But the journalist explains that the concept of having a revolving door between government and private media is not a secret. In the context of Davao City, because terms in local government posts are limited, a journalist may not stay long in government, so he or she will soon return to private practice. He says this is not really seen as a problem in Davao City because the question of having an independent press is questionable in the first place.

A community journalist who has worked in the province and Metro Manila shares a slightly different perspective. The revolving door dilemma in the community press in his view may not be as big as Noli de Castro (TV anchor turned vice president turned TV anchor again) or Rigoberto "Bobi" Tiglao (journalist turned presidential spokesperson turned columnist). But it does happen in a worse kind of way. There is no revolving door, he says, adding that it is more of a two-door-one-foot-in-each scenario wherein some reporters are casual employees of the local government while others receive money for the occasional interviews with officials.

But what sets Duterte apart, according to many of the journalists interviewed for this paper, is that he has made himself close to reporters at a personal level. There is a sense of camaraderie, he says. The mayor has made himself accessible such that he will sit down and eat at a *panciteria* with them. He treats reporters as equals or friends, and not as journalists who are only after a story.

Duterte as mayor was very media savvy. The access he gave to local reporters, plus the fact that he speaks the local language, made him so endearing. Media relations with the institution or local government was no longer a formal relation; it is a very personal relation, says a former Davao journalist. Because Duterte was the better operator among other politicians, more media would come to him. This is the reason why the journalist says he is so careful not to be associated with any politician. In his view, the media today is being attacked by Duterte and his group not entirely because of their critical reporting but because they are seen as political operators or as entities tied to the opposition.

In Davao City, news outlet *MindaNews* has been known to run critical stories but remains an organization that Duterte has not attacked. Journalists interviewed for this paper say that this group of journalists led by Carol Arguillas, *MindaNews*' editor-in-chief, has established themselves as journalists that cannot be bought by or are not aligned with any politician.

MindaNews is the news service arm of the Mindanao Institute of Journalism (Minjourn), a nonstock, nonprofit media organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Started as the Mindanao News and Information Cooperative Center in 2001, Minjourn seeks "to promote knowledge and public awareness of Mindanao issues through publication, training, databank, and research services; provide news and information to news organizations and the

general public through its news service, *MindaNews*; and help improve the journalism profession in Mindanao" (MindaNews, n.d.).

Fast forward to 2016. Duterte, weeks after winning the presidency, asserted that "corrupt" reporters "are not exempted from assassination" (AFP 2016). This would be one of many more attacks that media organizations and individual journalists would encounter under the current administration. Freedom House's (2017) latest "Freedom of the Press" report for 2017 cited that Duterte's hostile rhetoric toward members of the media further exacerbated an already perilous situation for journalists in the Philippines, as the country remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to practice journalism and where violent attacks against media workers usually go unpunished.

Conclusion

This paper must be read keeping in mind that *Mindanao Daily Mirror* is only one of many other news outlets in Davao City. But because it is one of the longest running publications in Mindanao, the newspaper offers continuity in the narrative of covering Duterte and drug-related events in Davao City. The findings drawn from its coverage, albeit limited in scope, may point to insights that can help explain the different repertoires of engagement that Duterte employs when dealing with journalists as well as the various factors that underpin these interactions.

Becoming president for Duterte, although not entirely unplanned, signaled an abrupt shift from his local experience to the national and even the international stage. This has exposed him to a media landscape that is wider in scope and more varied in terms of reportage—the kind that is not as easy to navigate and control as the news media that he was used to deal with during his three decades in local office. From the comforts of his bailiwick in Davao City, he took office in Malacañang in Manila where the same kind of patronage dispensed to Davao media cannot exactly be replicated. Turning one's relationship with a journalist to personal rather than professional as was the experience in Davao City is not entirely possible. This stems from that fact that many major national news outlets, unlike most community papers, operate on a business model that to some extent does not have to significantly rely on political patronage. This, in turn, has created space for some journalists to go beyond conventional reporting on Duterte's "war on drugs." Duterte is not used to such kind of reporting, as he has received

little criticism for the most part of his rule in Davao City. However, it is crucial to note that not all national news outlets and journalists, despite having a fairly viable business model and source of income, has done critical reporting on Duterte and his drug war. In fact, there are media outlets and reporters that are known supporters of the administration and would run uncritical stories favoring President Duterte today. For future research, it would be good to study how the patronage dispensed by Duterte in Davao City is being translated at the national level given his access to more resources as president (public and private) compared to being a city mayor.

The media experience in covering Duterte and his hardline stance on crime also allows for some introspection, to examine the contours and cracks in the profession. As narrated above, the local media's failure to cast a critical eye on Duterte's drug war when it started was compounded by other institutions also failing to investigate and hold actors to account. It was not until the CHR investigation when national newspapers started to really look into the killings happening in Davao City. For the most part, the national media, too, were looking at it as a purely local event, with no national implication or without relation to human rights. While it is important to be critical of government actions, it is also important to be critical of how journalism in communities and in Metro Manila is being done, even if the old longstanding issues of reporting remain, i.e., low pay, lack of support for quality reporting, and the appropriation of journalism by partisan ideological or political interests. It would be helpful to extend this research to uncover ways that have made it possible for news outlets like *MindaNews*, the *Mindanao Times*, and other independent news outlets to thrive in the local setting without compromising its independence.

Finally, the way many Davaoeños were not generally outraged by the killings happening in Davao City then is reflective of the way Filipinos, in general, have also become indifferent to the killings caused by the drug war and the attacks against journalists caused by their critical reporting. An assessment of how Filipinos understand the media's role in a democracy and in the context of reporting extrajudicial killings and human rights stories would also be important to analyze.

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Developing a Method for Recording Drug-Related Killings

DIANNA LIMPIN AND RUTH SIRINGAN

ABSTRACT. President Rodrigo Duterte's "war on drugs" has fostered a culture of violence and impunity that has seen an alarming increase in the number of unresolved killings. There is a need to probe these killings in a methodological manner so as not to cause even more confusion among a people already bombarded with misinformation on a near-daily basis. There are a number of databases and estimates of the drug war's casualty count, but few actually take the time to explain how they come up with their figures. This study aims to (1) develop a method in recording drug-related deaths in the Philippines, (2) to create a database of reported killings using the method developed, and (3) to identify key trends in the circumstances of the deaths and the media's coverage of those deaths. The main contribution of this study is neither an exact death toll nor an exhaustive record of victims but a clear set of parameters on what constitute drug-related deaths and how they can be recorded by other concerned parties. Due to practical constraints, the study was based only on the news reports of a single source. Still, recording drug-related killings is a step toward seeking accountability from its perpetrators. It is hoped that, through this endeavor, institutions, especially the academe, will be encouraged to monitor killings in their localities, particularly those that are often out of the mainstream media's reach.

KEYWORDS. drug-related killings · counting · database · drug war

Introduction

On the campaign trail of the 2016 Philippine presidential election, Rodrigo Duterte had promised to kill a hundred thousand criminals and dump so many bodies in Manila Bay that "'fish will grow fat' from feeding on them" (AFP 2016a). He had promised good business for funeral parlors with all the dead bodies that he was to supply (AFP 2016a). He had promised drug pushers, kidnappers, and robbers that they would be killed should they "resist" arrest (AFP 2016b). He had, on several occasions, unequivocally promised death for drug suspects (Cigaral 2016; Iyengar 2016). In an event celebrating his presidential

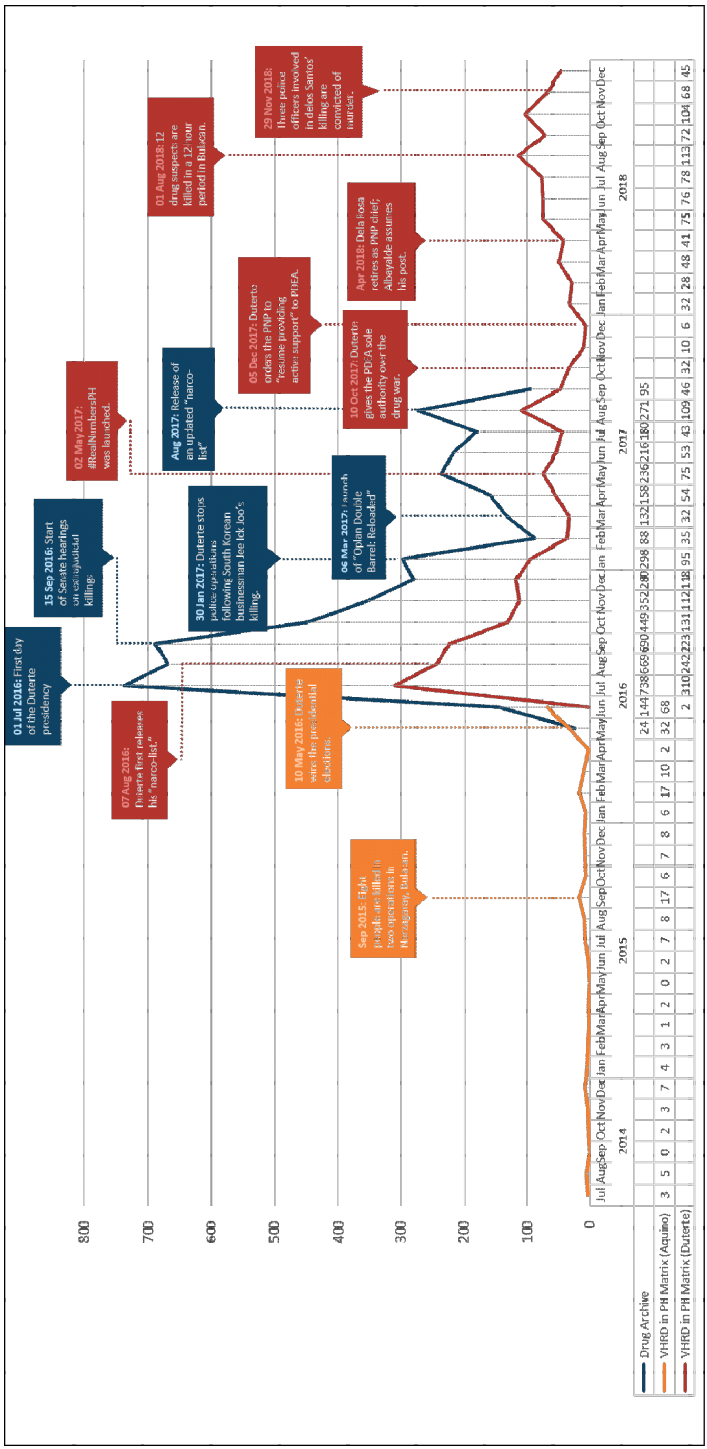

FIGURE 1. Drug-related deaths from July 2014 to December 2018 with notable events plotted. Additional source of data is the Drug Archive (see David et al., 2018).

victory, he had even encouraged citizens to take the law into their own hands by killing drug pushers themselves. "Shoot him [a suspected drug pusher] and I'll give you a medal," he said (quoted in Gomez 2016). Duterte had promised the Filipinos that his war on drugs would be bloody (Bascos 2015), and he has made good on that promise.

From May to June of 2016, before the then president-elect was even inaugurated, the number of drug-related killings had already started to increase (figure 1; Cepeda 2016; O'Neill 2016). On July 1, 2016, Duterte's first day in office, the Drug Archive recorded a total of 39 killings (David et al. 2018). That was the same day that the Philippine National Police (PNP) released Command Memorandum Circular (CMC) No. 16-2016, more popularly known as Oplan Double Barrel, and formally launched the Duterte administration's two-pronged, police-led drug war—with Project Tokhang at its forefront. Tokhang, an amalgam of the Visayan words *toktok* and *hangyo*—which mean "to knock" and "to plead," respectively (Ong 2018)—was launched with the intention of conducting house-to-house visitations of suspected drug personalities and persuading them "to stop their illegal drug activities" (PNP 2016). However, with the spate of drug-related killings occurring during these operations, human rights advocates saw tokhang as but a mechanism for killing. Lawyer Jose Manuel "Chel" Diokno pointed out that CMC 16-2016 repeatedly used the term "neutralization" in reference to drug personalities (Dizon and Tubeza 2017). He argued that the word "had no counterpart in law" and that ". . . neutralization only means one thing. And that is to kill" (Dizon and Tubeza 2017). The police denied this accusation. Then PNP chief and now Senator Ronald dela Rosa retorted that to kill is but one of the many ways to neutralize (Tubeza 2017). Yet, in the months that followed Oplan Double Barrel's implementation, the bodies of drug suspects continued to pile up in the thousands at the hands of both law enforcement agents and unidentified assailants.

Attempting to Account for the Dead

Due to the sudden rise in the number of killings, various institutions—ranging from media platforms and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to government agencies, and most recently, the academe—saw the need to monitor and record the number of drug-related deaths in the country. One of the first to do so was the news website *Inquirer.* On

July 7, 2016, merely seven days into the new administration, it published a list of "casualties in the Duterte administration's war on crime"—this became the Kill List. Despite their attempt to record victims of the "war on *crime*," the editor's note prefacing the list stated that "most of those killed were identified by the police as *tulak* (suspected drug dealers or pushers) in particular. An entry in the list generally included a person's name and alias, the time of his/her death, the location of the incident, the assailants responsible for the killing, and other relevant details, such as inclusion in a drug watchlist. These entries were grouped according to the dates of the incidents, which were then arranged from the most recent to the least. As of February 16, 2017, *Inquirer*'s Kill List had recorded a total of 2,174 deaths since May 10, 2016—the day after the national elections. On October 8, 2016, *Vera Files* used the *Inquirer*'s data to create graphs and infographics summarizing the killings across a number of variables. Excluding entries with incomplete details, they were able to analyze 1,153 out of the then 1,213 recorded cases. They found that most of the victims were males and suspected drug pushers that were killed by the police.

A week after the release of the Kill List, the ABS–CBN Investigative and Research Group also published their own attempt to monitor the killings using news reports and press releases of the PNP and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)—this time focusing exclusively on drug-related deaths. The list itself only reports the names and aliases of the victims and the locations and dates of the incidents, but unlike the Kill List, ABS–CBN's death toll also includes an interactive map and charts summarizing the number of killings according to month, province, region, and assailant type. From May 10, 2016 to July 2, 2019, the group had recorded a total of 5,997 drug war deaths.

In spite of the media's attempts to generate reliable casualty counts, the real number remained elusive, as law enforcement agencies, those at the frontlines of the war on drugs, kept their data under wraps. On May 2, 2017, amid debates about the actual death toll, the then-newly created Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs (ICAD)—consisting of various government agencies led by PDEA—organized a forum called "#RealNumbersPH" in an effort to supposedly "clarify the confusing and divisive numbers in the government's campaign [against illegal drugs]," according to forum host and political science professor Antonio Contreras (quoted in *Rappler* 2017). In their coverage of this event, *Rappler* noted that "the need to 'clarify' presumably stemmed from a video message of Vice President Leni

Robredo in mid-March 2017," wherein she claimed that, as of then, 7,000 people had been summarily executed—a figure vehemently denied by the PNP. Based on data from the police, 2,717 drug suspects were killed in legitimate antidrug operations from July 1, 2016 to April 23, 2017. As of the end of March 2017, another 1,847 cases out of the 9,432 "homicide cases under investigation" (HCUI) were classified as "drug-related"—bringing the total number of confirmed drug-related deaths to 4,564 less than a year into the Duterte administration (Gavilan 2017; *Rappler* 2017).

Following that forum, the #RealNumbersPH initiative became an ongoing endeavor. A Facebook page with the same name was set up, and on it, updates on figures that have to do with the war on drugs are regularly posted. As of this writing, their latest update claimed that a total of 5,526 people have been killed in antidrug operations during the first half of the administration, from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2019. HCUI and drug-related deaths perpetrated by unidentified assailants were not among the reported figures, but, in a television interview with PNP spokesperson Col. Bernard Banac on March 4, 2019, he said that the number of "deaths under investigation" (DUI), a term used interchangeably with HCUI, had reached 29,000—with at least 3,062 linked to illegal drugs (Tupas 2019).

With #RealNumbersPH, the government sought to belie casualty counts they regarded as fake, bloated, and misleading (Santos and Ebbighausen 2018). This intention was made clear by the caption to the Philippine Television Network's (PTV) livestream of the May 2017 forum: "Do not be fooled by Fake Numbers. Know the *Real* Numbers." Yet, contrary to their goal of providing the public with "real" and reliable information on the drug war, the figures released were found to be too general and rife with inconsistencies (*Vera Files* 2018). According to the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), for instance, the #RealNumbersPH death toll as of last May 23, 2017, (3,027) was greater than those provided by both the PNP Directorate for Operations (2,962) and the PNP Double Barrel Secretariat (3,002) for the same time period. The discrepancies in the numbers of antidrug operations conducted, suspects arrested, and individuals who surrendered reported by #RealNumbersPH and the two PNP units were found to be even greater, with the former presenting figures that were thousands more than those sourced from the PNP.

Apart from law enforcement agencies and the media, NGOs and unaffiliated private individuals have also attempted to gather information on and map out victims of Duterte's war on drugs. The Foundation for Media Alternatives, in partnership with the Association for Progressive Communications and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, recorded a total of 3,400 drug war victims from June 30, 2016 to February 19, 2018, and plotted them on a map in their website called Ang Pangako (The Promise), which the Foundation for Media Alternatives described as "an online repository of information on the aftereffects of the campaign against illegal drugs." A group of concerned individuals also sought to make a compilation of victims of the drug war. Like the Foundation for Media Alternatives, they used mostly media reports to gather information on the victims, which they then used to set up individual profiles of the dead in the form of "an online memorial" on their website, Paalam (Goodbye) (www.paalam.org). In accordance with their goal of countering the dehumanization that they feared may come with reporting casualties as mere numbers and statistics, they did not indicate the total number of victims that they were able to record.

Seeing the lack of individual-level data to support the numerous varying death tolls provided by both government and nongovernment organizations, the Ateneo School of Government of the Ateneo de Manila University sought to create the "most comprehensive, available victim-level list of killings in the Duterte administration's antidrug campaign"—marking the first initiative from the academic sector to record deaths resulting from Duterte's war on drugs. With De La Salle University, the University of the Philippines Diliman, and the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University, the Ateneo School of Government formed the Drug Archive—a research consortium that aims to conduct "multidisciplinary and evidence-based research on the antidrug campaign in the Philippines." The consortium developed a database of drug-related killings that was first revealed to the public in a forum held at the Ateneo de Manila University in June 2018 (Talabong 2018; detailed overview in David et al. 2018). Using as much information as they could gather from media reports and other publicly available sources, the Drug Archive team accounted for cases that conformed to the inclusion criteria that they had set, and encoded information from those cases across an unspecified number of variables related to the victims and the incidents in question. In the second forum organized by the team in April 2019,

they revealed that they had recorded a total of 7,029 drug-related deaths from May 10, 2016 to December 31, 2018.

With the above death-monitoring efforts, it is clear that coming up with an accurate number of drug-related deaths is a tall order. This difficulty stems largely from a lack of transparency on the end of law enforcement agencies and partly from methodological problems encountered by those who have attempted to count the dead. The opaqueness of the PNP's data is no longer new information; the government has repeatedly refused to hand over documentation of drug war cases to probing parties for reasons related to "national security" (Gavilan 2018; Torres-Tupas 2019). Furthermore, the social cards posted on the Facebook page of #RealNumbersPH only report general and oftentimes inconsistent summary figures. Since the launch of the antidrug campaign, the police have also created confusing and overlapping categories to describe deaths occurring outside the confines of police operations—DUI in August 2016, which evolved into "murder cases under investigation" (MCUI) in January 2017, and later into HCUI in March 2017 (Santos and Ebbighausen 2018)—which are not reported as part of #RealNumbersPH. Considering that the PNP and other law enforcement agencies at the forefront of the drug war serve as the primary sources of information of those who have attempted to monitor the killings, this lack of transparency threatens the validity of the latter's data and analyses. Due to the public's restricted access to police data, concerned organizations and individuals have mostly depended on media reports to track the killings. However, the media itself largely depend on limited police reports (Santos and Ebbighausen 2018) and have, on most occasions, merely echoed what law enforcers have said (CMFR 2019). They also suffer from metropolitan bias, with killings occurring in far-flung areas of the country being less likely to reach mainstream news—a limitation that was acknowledged by the Drug Archive team as well.

Aside from these issues with the sources, there also seems to be a problem in defining what exactly qualifies as a "drug-related death." This has resulted in the conflation of the motives behind the killings. For example, the *Inquirer*'s Kill List and Paalam both took note of cases that had no clear links to illegal drugs; the former recorded victims of the "war on crime" in general while the latter included "unexplained murders that have *unclear motives* but are 'copycat' by modus operandi of drug-related killings." Yet, when *Vera Files* analyzed the Kill List, this distinction was not pointed out, and their findings were presented as

an analysis of the "war on *drugs*." The government itself appears to be confused as to the real number and nature of the deaths. After repeatedly claiming that not all deaths under investigation are related to drugs (Cudis 2019), they then included the 16,355 HCUI as of the end of September 2017 in the "#RealNumbers" section of the "Fighting Illegal Drugs" chapter of the president's 2017 year-end accomplishment report (*Vera Files* 2019). In a resolution released April 2018, the Supreme Court questioned both the high casualty count and the fact that it was included in the administration's accomplishment report, which they warned ". . . may lead to the inference that these are state-sponsored killings" (Supreme Court 2018, 46; specifically GR 234359). During a press conference in July 2019, Communications Assistant Secretary Marie Rafael-Banaag dismissed this inclusion of HCUI as a mere "copy and paste" gaffe committed by whoever prepared the president's report, reiterating that "HCUIs are *not at all* related to the war on drugs" (quoted in Tordesillas 2019). Moments later, however, she contradicted herself by saying that the case of Kian de los Santos, the 17-year-old boy killed in Caloocan City under the guise of a legitimate antidrug police operation, was classified under the same category supposedly unrelated to the drug war (Tordesillas 2019).

The inconsistent use of terms and the lack of a clear set of definitions may account for the great disparity in the death toll estimates of concerned parties. Whereas the government does not report HCUI or DUI that are linked to illegal drugs in its #RealNumbersPH updates, some casualty counts include all deaths under those categories in theirs—thereby generating numbers that are tens of thousands apart. This was also *Vera Files*'s verdict when they fact-checked the vice president's claim that 7,000 people had been summarily executed: "While it's true that more than 8,000 have been killed since President Rodrigo Duterte waged a bloody war on drugs, not all these deaths are drug-related" (*Vera Files* 2017). This is not to say that deaths that have nothing to do with illegal drugs are not worth our attention. There is no doubt that Duterte's "war on drugs" has fostered a culture of violence and impunity that has seen an alarming increase in the number of unresolved killings—regardless of drug link—and that, in itself, merits public attention and outrage. However, there is a need to probe these killings in a methodological manner so as to not cause even more confusion among a people already bombarded with misinformation on a near-daily basis. This is what the Violence,

Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines (VHRD) project of the Third World Studies Center of the University of the Philippines Diliman, in partnership with Ghent University and the University of Antwerp, sought to do in developing a method for recording the victims of the antidrug campaign.

DEVELOPING A DATABASE FOR DRUG-RELATED KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES

There is no shortage of estimates of the drug war's casualty count, but few actually take the time to explain how they come up with those numbers. The Drug Archive was the first to produce a working paper explaining their methodology, and the VHRD research network saw the need for more similarly academic input on the matter. This study was thus undertaken with three main goals: (1) to develop a method in recording drug-related deaths in the Philippines; (2) to create a database of reported killings using the method developed; and (3) to identify key trends in the circumstances of the deaths and the media's coverage of those deaths. It must be noted, however, that the main contribution of this study is neither an exact death toll nor an exhaustive record of victims but a clear set of parameters on what constitute drug-related deaths and how they can be recorded by other concerned parties. Recording drug-related killings is a step toward seeking accountability from its perpetrators. We hope that, through this endeavor, institutions, especially academic ones, will be encouraged to monitor killings in their localities, particularly those that are often out of the mainstream media's reach.

Methods

Due to practical constraints, the database that was developed only made use of news reports from a single source—the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*'s online portal, *Inquirer* (www.inquirer.net). The *Inquirer* was chosen for a number of reasons. It has a reputation for being the Philippine's "paper of record" (Claudio 2014) and has a wide reach across the country "with four regional bureaus, over 130 provincial correspondents . . . and four printing presses in Cebu, Davao, Laguna, and Manila. . ." (Philippine Daily Inquirer, n.d.). Moreover, its online portal has an organized and easily navigable article index that may be browsed on a daily level. With the Kill List, the *Inquirer* was also the

first organization to compile and publish a record of killings resulting from the Duterte administration's anticriminality campaign.[1] Thus, we believed that the *Inquirer*'s coverage of drug-related deaths would provide us with a somewhat representative sample of reported drug war victims. However, we also recognize that relying on a single source—a single media source at that—comes with many limitations, which will be discussed at a later section. To be able to address these limitations, we hope to be able to utilize other sources of information on the deaths—such as other news sources, court cases, witness accounts, and government sources, should they become available to the public—in the future. We encourage other interested parties to do the same.

Inclusion Criteria

There were two sets of criteria for inclusion in the database: the (1) Article Inclusion Criteria and the (2) Subject Inclusion Criteria. The former was used to select articles reporting on drug-related incidents that led to at least one person's death while the latter was used to select the deaths that were considered in this study.

Article Inclusion Criteria

The database covered articles published from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018. The last two years of former President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III's administration were included to be able to see any continuities, discontinuities, or changes in the trends of *Inquirer*-reported drug-related deaths as the country transitioned to the Duterte administration. Moreover, while it is often regarded as common knowledge that the number of drug-related killings during the present administration is greater than those during the Aquino administration, we have not seen this claim backed by empirical data. Our research tried to address this gap with data drawn from verifiable information.

Only articles that were listed under the "News" and "Regions" sections of the *Inquirer*'s article index were considered. Encoders were instructed to go through articles whose headlines contain keywords pertaining in general to violence, death, criminal activity and illegal

1. It is worth noting that, in 2017, business tycoon Ramon Ang, whom Duterte has described as a "fast friend," acquired a majority stake in the newspaper. There were concerns that this change in leadership would erode the *Inquirer*'s journalistic standards (*Forbes* 2017), but since then, there have been no observed or reported changes in the news organization's coverage of drug-related deaths and other acts of violence implicating the state.

drugs. In particular, for articles on the antidrug campaign published after Duterte's presidential win. They then looked for at least one of the following: (1) a drug-related, law enforcement-led operation or activity, (2) a drug-related, insurgent group-led operation or activity, (3) a drug-related encounter between identified private individuals, or (4) a drug-related vigilante or unknown assailant activity. The article was then included in the database if any of those four scenarios led to a person's death in the manner specified under the Subject Inclusion Criteria.

Subject Inclusion Criteria

Although this database was constructed to record drug-related deaths, we also decided to make a tally of the other outcomes (e.g., injuries, arrests, surrenders, among others) occurring in conjunction with those deaths. However, complete details were still only encoded for victims who were killed through violent means—often shot, stabbed, or beaten to death—and who satisfied at least one of the following criteria: (1) was reportedly killed during a drug-related operation, activity, or encounter; (2) was reported to be involved in the drug trade or in the war on drugs in whatever capacity (e.g., alleged drug personality, law enforcer, informant, among others); (3) was reported to be in possession of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia at the time of the killing or when his/her body was found; (4) was reported to be associated with someone involved in the drug trade or in the war on drugs (e.g. , kin, employees of drug suspects, and antidrug agents); or (5) was reportedly killed by someone involved in the drug trade for drug-related reasons or while under the influence of drugs.

The first four criteria were meant to describe victims of the antidrug campaign—mostly suspected drug personalities, collateral damage victims, and law enforcement agents killed in action. On the other hand, part of the fifth criterion was meant to account for victims of drug suspects, people whose deaths are typically not explored by groups investigating drug war casualties. The inclusion of this last criterion was done in recognition of the protestations of some that only the deaths of drug suspects are of interest to human rights advocates and not those of their victims (Romero 2019). Moreover, there may be a relationship between these two kinds of drug-related deaths—those targeting and those perpetrated by suspected drug personalities—as the latter is sometimes used to justify the existence of the former. However, it is important to note that this inclusion does

not equate possibly state-sponsored killings to those carried out by criminals.

Exclusion Criteria

Killings committed for identified motives that have nothing to do with the illegal drug trade or with the war on drugs, such as personal grudges or political rivalry, were excluded from this database—even if the victims satisfied the abovementioned subject criteria. Furthermore, deaths that initially satisfied the subject criteria but were later reported as unrelated to illegal drugs were removed from the database.

Variables

Once a subject satisfied the inclusion criteria listed above, an entry was made in the Microsoft Excel file of the database and twenty-seven variables were taken into account. These variables and their corresponding options were derived from an assessment of articles that were sampled during the initial development of this database and from the consultation of earlier counting initiatives and relevant government documents. Related variables were then grouped together to form the following nine categories:

1. Subject Status: This variable indicates whether a subject is dead or alive. A number of possible outcomes, such as "injured," "arrested," and "surrendered," are available for living individuals.
2. Subject Demographics: These include both demographic information (i.e., gender, age, and occupation) and variables that serve as distinguishing characteristics (i.e., name and residence).
3. Assailant Information: This category consists of variables on the perpetration of the killing—including the type of assailant responsible, the type of operation during which the subject was killed (if applicable), and the manner through which he or she was killed.
4. Drug Involvement: One of the variables under this category specifies whether or not a subject was reportedly involved in illegal drugs, which is then used to separate targeted drug suspects from collateral damage victims. This category also includes any information on the subject's alleged drug involvement that were acquired prior to the killing as well

as his or her reported drug personality type: high-profile target, user, or pusher.

5. Drug Possession: Closely linked to the preceding category, this refers to whether or not illegal drugs were found with the subject. It also includes the type, amount, and value of the drugs recovered.
6. Other Items Found: This indicates, if any, other notable items were found with the subject aside from illegal drugs, like arms, drug paraphernalia, money, placard, among others.
7. Incident Information: This includes the date, time, and location of the incident.
8. Number of Deaths Involved: This variable indicates whether the subject was involved in an incident with a single death or one with multiple casualties.
9. Administration: Dependent on the date of the incident, this variable indicates if the death occurred during the Aquino or the Duterte administration.

The complete list of variables, corresponding options, and definitions devised by the researchers can be downloaded from the project website, https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/database/. Among these twenty-seven variables, ten allowed for multiple option selections: (1) subject status, (2) occupation, (3) specific assailants (under the state agent category), (4) manner of death, (5) source of prior information on drug involvement, (6–9) the type, amount (in number and in unit), and value of illegal drugs recovered, and (10) other items found with the body. The rest required only one entry for every variable. Furthermore, all but four of these variables were used to define the completeness of an entry. The source of prior information, the amount of drugs recovered—both the numerical component and the unit of measurement—and the value of these drugs were not considered required data points.

Aside from these variables, an "Additional Notes" section was included in the database, where encoders could input qualitative information regarding the subject or the incident which the current set variables could not encompass. The text of placards found in "body dumps" and items recovered from the victims that were not among the listed options were also encoded here.

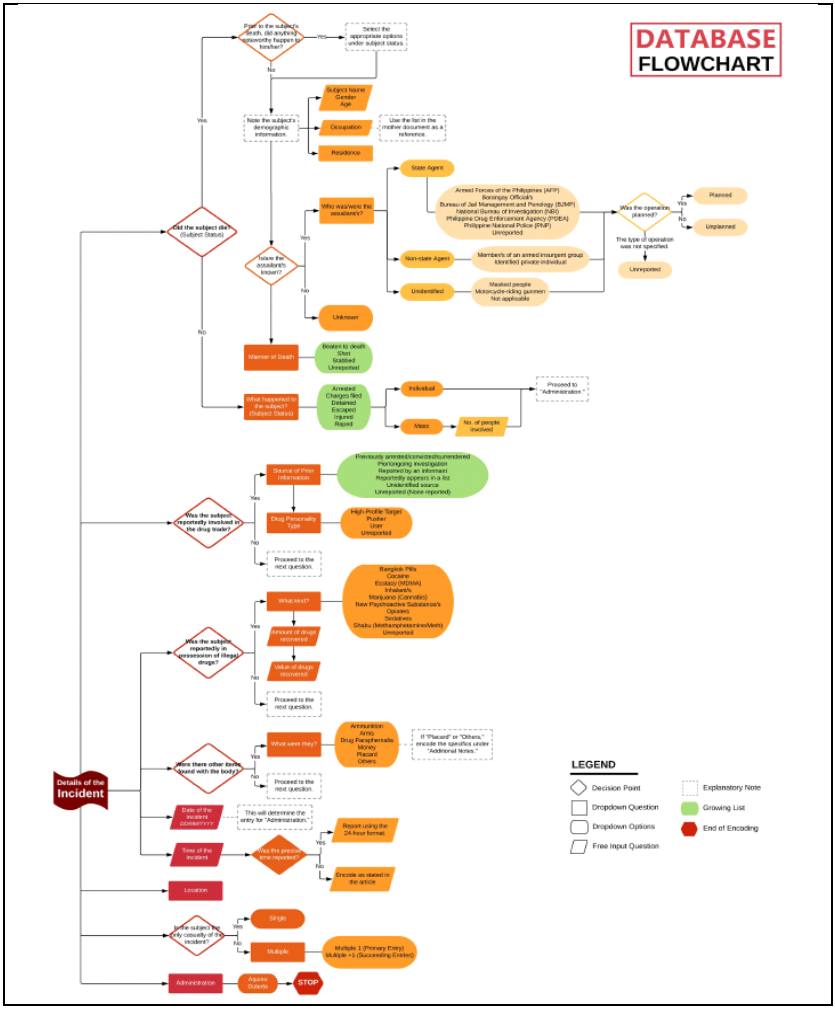

FIGURE 2. The database encoding flowchart. A high resolution copy can be downloaded from the Dahas (Violence) website at https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/download-section/.

Encoding

This database was created by a team of five people, of which four were responsible for encoding. All encoders were briefed regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the definitions of the variables and their options, and the coding process. Once an incident was identified

to be "drug-related," all relevant actors involved in the incident were encoded in the manner illustrated in the encoding flowchart (figure 2; a high resolution copy can be downloaded at the project website https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/download-section/). As seen in the flowchart, the coding process was guided by four main questions, which mirror the subject inclusion criteria:

1. Did the subject die?
2. Was the subject reportedly involved in the drug trade?
3. Was the subject reportedly in possession of illegal drugs?
4. Were there other items found with the body?

First, they were to note whether or not a subject died, as complete details were only encoded for the dead. At most, only three variables were encoded for living individuals involved in the same incident as dead victims—subject status, the number of individuals involved in an outcome (if applicable), and administration. Under subject status, encoders could select multiple outcomes for the same subject or set of subjects granted that those outcomes were mutually exclusive from one another—that is, they could occur simultaneously. For example, for individuals who were arrested, detained, and then released with charges filed, only the outcomes "Released" and "Charges filed" were encoded. If a particular outcome or set of outcomes, excluding death, involved more than one person, encoders chose the mass counterpart of that outcome and indicated the number of individuals involved in the succeeding column. Otherwise, they chose the individual counterpart. After indicating the subject status, they proceeded to encode the administration under which the outcome occurred and leave everything else blank.

For victims who died, encoders were given the discretion to encode outcomes prior to a subject's death which they deemed noteworthy. Examples of these include detention, torture, and rape before the death. After selecting relevant outcomes, they then encoded the victim's name, gender, age, occupation, and residence. To ensure that occupations were encoded in a uniform manner, encoders were instructed to consult and contribute to a reference list of occupations. Even previously held occupations were encoded, but if they were reported along with positions held by victims at the time of their death, the latter were encoded first. For residence, encoders used a dropdown list of the 2018 Philippine Standard Geographic Code published

online by the Philippine Statistical Authority. This list contains all regions, provinces, cities, municipalities, and *barangay* (villages) in the country, and encoders were instructed to encode the most specific level reported in the article.

After indicating the subjects' demographic information, encoders distinguished between assailants that were seen by witnesses or captured by surveillance cameras—or both—(Known Assailants) and those that were not (Unknown Assailants). Known assailants were divided into three general categories—state agent, nonstate agent, and unidentified assailants—which were further divided into specific agencies and groups of people, as shown in the figure 2. State agents were defined as members of law enforcement agencies, such as the PNP, PDEA, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and the National Bureau of Investigation. Barangay officials were also classified as state agents given their key role in peace-and-order maintenance within their unit of government and their involvement in antidrug operations conducted by the police. Nonstate agents, on the other hand, were defined as either members of armed insurgent groups or private individuals whose identities were revealed. The third and final category consisted of unidentified assailants, who differ from unknown assailants as we have defined them in that the former are those *seen* by witnesses or captured by surveillance cameras *but merely failed to be identified*. These include masked or hooded figures and motorcycle-riding gunmen. If the killing happened during a law enforcement-led operation, encoders indicated whether or not the said operation was planned. The last variable under assailant information then asked for the manner through which the victim was killed by these assailants.

The three succeeding questions guiding the coding process served to establish subjects' involvement or lack thereof in the illegal drug trade. The second question directly asked whether or not the individual was reportedly involved in the trade, to which an affirmative answer would necessitate entries under the next two variables: the source of any information in existence prior to the individual's death regarding his/her involvement in illegal drugs and his/her drug personality type. Although drug suspects are sometimes reported to play multiple roles in the drug trade, encoders were instructed to select only one of three possible options: (1) high-profile target, (2) pusher, or (3) user (based on "Glossary of Terms," PNP 2014). These three options were assigned hierarchical values such that if a suspect was reported to be both a pusher and a user, only "pusher" would be encoded.

TABLE 1. Victim categories

Category	Cell/variable to be highlighted	Definition
Armed accomplice	Subject status	The subject (1) was killed during a drug-related law enforcement-led operation, (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity, (3) allegedly engaged—usually via a "shootout"—or fought back against state agents during the operation.
Body dump	Known/ unknown assailant	The subject (1) was abducted (by a Known Assailant), killed, and then dumped in the street or in a secluded place; or (2) was killed somewhere with no witnesses (by an Unknown Assailant), with the exception of his/her residence, and left at the scene of the crime.
Collateral damage	Subject status	The subject (1) was killed during a drug-related operation, encounter between private individuals, or vigilante assault but (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity. This usually includes passersby or individuals associated with targeted drug suspects (e.g., kin, employees, neighbors).
Contested account	Additional notes (under which the specifics are encoded)	Opposing narratives are being presented by the different actors involved in the incident—typically between the police and witnesses or the victim's kin.
Highly publicized case	Name	The case received considerable media attention, perhaps due to or leading to national or international uproar.
Mistaken identity	Subject status	The subject was killed reportedly because he/she was believed to be involved, erroneously or without sufficient evidence, in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity.
Officer killed in action	Occupation	The subject (1) is a law enforcer who (2) was killed during a law enforcement-led operation, drug-related or otherwise.
Victims of drug suspects	First cell of the entry	The victim (1) was killed by a drug suspect but (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity.

As some individuals are not directly reported to be involved in illegal drugs but are implied to be so with the discovery of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or accusatory placards with their bodies, the last two questions were asked about the recovery of drugs and other items in the crime scene. The type, amount, and value of the drugs recovered were then encoded for those reportedly in possession of illegal drugs. On the other hand, encoders chose among six possible groups of items to encode under "Other Items Found": (1) ammunition, (2) arms, (3) drug paraphernalia, (4) money, (5) placard, and (6) others. As mentioned, the specific text written on these placards and the specific items under the "Others" option were encoded under the "Additional Notes" section provided.

The last variables to be encoded were those under incident information, the number of deaths involved, and administration. Under incident information are the date, time, and location of the incident during which the death occurred. Whenever possible, the exact date and time were encoded. However, when these were not available, month- or year-level reports of date and phrasal indicators of time, such as morning, afternoon, and evening, were accepted. Mentions of date or time ranges were also encoded as they were reported in the article. Incident location was then encoded in the same manner that residence was: using the 2018 Philippine Standard Geographic Code list, encoders selected the most specific geographic level possible. Under the number of deaths involved, encoders selected "Single" if a subject was the sole casualty in a particular incident. On the other hand, victims of an incident involving more than one death were encoded as either "Multiple 1" if they were the first entry for that incident or as "Multiple +1" if they were succeeding entries. Finally, dependent on the date of the incident, the deaths were classified as having occurred under the Aquino (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2016) or the Duterte administration. Though not of direct analytical value, the events surrounding the death of a victim, the almost negligible details in the background can aid in the checking and validation of database entries. Out of these considerations, eight categories of victims were developed (see table 1).

Each category was assigned a unique color, which was used to highlight one cell in one entry. In some instances, victims were classified under more than one category and had multiple highlighted cells. These color codes later allowed the researchers to filter the database and look at particular cases that were of interest. It is worth noting that although these categories were developed and applied after

all entries in the database were encoded, they could have easily been applied, and perhaps were better off applied, during the course of encoding.

Checking

Once the encoders completed their assigned dates, their outputs were rechecked both manually and via Excel functions.

Manual Checking

Manual checking entailed rereading the articles added by the encoders and making sure that (1) they met the article inclusion criteria, (2) unique entries were made for all reported victims that satisfied the subject inclusion criteria, (3) the information encoded conformed to the definitions that were set, and (4) these information were encoded in the manner specified in the coding guide. This phase of checking aimed to minimize any errors due to possibly differing interpretations of the criteria and the variables and those brought about by human error. It was also during this phase that victims belonging to any of the victim categories developed were classified accordingly.

Checking via Excel Functions

Excel functions, on the other hand, were used to ensure unique entries and logical content. First, a frequency table of the victims' names was generated via a pivot table. The names were then sorted in descending order of frequency to see if any were encoded more than once. Entries of those with names or aliases appearing multiple times were reviewed to ensure that they represent unique individuals. Any duplicate entries found were then removed from the database. A similar procedure was followed for individuals with similar sounding names. The list of names was arranged alphabetically and reviewed one-by-one. The entries of victims whose names had little variation in spelling were revisited to ascertain uniqueness and duplicate entries were subsequently removed.

Excel filters were also used to check if options matched their logical pairs. Two things, in particular, were checked. First, the possession of either illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia necessitated an affirmative entry in drug involvement but not the other way around. Second, all drug suspects who were killed during planned (i.e., antidrug) operations should have "prior/ongoing investigation" as a source of prior information on the victim's drug involvement. This is in accordance with the notion of planned operations as the police have defined them

TABLE 2. Secondary filters used to separate victims of drug suspects from the rest of the entries

Additional notes	*Must be neither an informant/asset nor related to anyone involved in the drug trade or the drug war
Occupation	*Must not have any link (direct or indirect) to the drug trade or the drug war
Specific assailant	Identified private individual
Type of operation	Not applicable
Involved in the drug trade?	No
In possession of drugs?	No
Single or multiple death/s?	*Victims killed in the same incident must not be involved in the drug trade or the drug war

in their *Revised PNP Manual on Anti-Illegal Drugs Operations and Investigation* —"a designed police operation" requiring at least some investigation into suspected drug ties (PNP 2014, 24–66,94).

Data Preparation and Analysis

After being checked, the entries were combined in a single worksheet. Since they were to be analyzed separately, entries for victims of drug suspects were then transferred to a different sheet. To do so, the color assigned to such entries during the classification of victims were used to filter the main database. As a confirmatory measure, the filters shown in table 2 were also applied and used to separate the said cases from the rest.

Once a separate sheet was created for victims of drug suspects, frequency distribution tables were generated for both databases using a combination of Pivot tables and Excel formulas. These include a percentage breakdown of each of the options under the variables. Finally, results were visualized with charts, graphs, or maps whenever possible.

Results and Discussion

This database covers drug-related deaths from the last two years of the Aquino administration to the first two and a half years of the Duterte administration, overall covering 1,645 days from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018. From those four and a half years, we were able to

TABLE 3. Summary of outcomes recorded in the database

Subject status	Aquino administration *July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2016 (731 days)*	Duterte administration *June 30, 2016 – December 31, 2018 (914 days)*	Total
Dead	226	2,511	2,737
Arrested	183	813	996
Charges filed	4	31	35
Detained	21	15	36
Escaped	30	152	182
Injured	31	188	219
Relieved from duty (Police officers)	0	30	30
Released	0	1	1
Surrendered	1	3	4
Transferred	0	6	6
Under investigation	0	2	2

record a total of 2,737 deaths, excluding those of victims of drug suspects, from 1,501 *Inquirer* articles. Two hundred and twenty-six (226) deaths were recorded under Aquino while 2,511 were recorded under Duterte. Excluding the 472 deaths that were recorded during the second half of 2018, there was an 802 percent increase in the number of reported drug-related deaths from the last two years of the former president to the first two years of Duterte. Apart from those deaths, we also arrived at a tally of other outcomes that occurred in conjunction with those deaths (see table 3).

The succeeding sections discuss the trends that surfaced in our analysis of the killings of these 2,737 drug suspects and victims typically regarded as "collateral damage" in the span of four and a half years. To do so, we attempt to answer the following four questions:

1. What do we know about the victims?
2. What do we know about the killings?
3. How are the killings related to illegal drugs?
4. When and where did these killings happen?

Before we answer these questions, however, two things must be noted. First, out of the 2,737 entries in our database, only 118 (4 percent) had complete details reported. David et al. (2018) worked

through the same difficulty but did not disclose their exact threshold. These unreported data points emphasize the need to consult other sources to further develop and improve this database. Second, with the exception of variables with options comprising less than 1 percent of the total values, the percentages reported under each variable were rounded off to the nearest whole number. Thus, readers may find that they may not always add up to a 100 percent.

What Do We Know About the Victims?

Regardless of administration, most of the victims were identified by either their aliases (Aquino, 8 percent; Duterte, 10 percent) or their full names (Aquino, 77 percent; Duterte, 74 percent). A small number of them, however, were not named or not yet identified when the articles reporting their deaths were released (Aquino, 15 percent; Duterte, 15 percent).

For both administrations, most of the victims killed were male (Aquino, 84 percent; Duterte, 83 percent) and only a small percentage were female (Aquino, 3 percent; Duterte, 4 percent). Those with unreported gender (Aquino, 13 percent; Duterte, 12 percent) were even greater than the number of female victims, who collectively comprised only 114 (4 percent) of the 2,737 individuals killed. One victim who was killed in January 2017 identified as a transgender woman.

Our records for the two administrations were also alike in that majority of the victims did not have reported ages, occupations, and residences. Only eighty-five (38 percent) had reported ages under the Aquino administration. Of those eighty-five people, one was a minor—a one-month-old baby who was killed when his father, a suspected drug pusher, was shot to death by two unidentified men—and five were senior citizens. On the other hand, 885 (35 percent) had reported ages under the Duterte administration—of which forty were aged eighteen and below and twenty-three were aged sixty and above. Furthermore, for both administrations, most of those with reported ages were in their thirties. However, a major point of difference between the two in terms of victim age is that more teenagers and children aged twelve and below were killed under the Duterte administration. While there was one such case during the Aquino administration, the number of children and teenagers killed in drug-related incidents rose to forty-eight under his successor. Aside from this difference in magnitude, we

TABLE 4. Type of assailants in drug-related killings

Assailants	Aquino		Duterte	
	N	%	N	%
State agent	125	55.3	1,685	67.1
Nonstate agent	19	8.4	41	1.6
Unidentified	57	25.2	652	26.0
Unknown	25	11.1	133	5.3
Total	226	100	2,511	100

TABLE 5. State agents involved in drug-related killings

Specific Agency	Aquino		Duterte	
	N	%	N	%
Armed Forces of the Philippines			5	0.30
Bureau of Jail Management and Penology			2	0.12
Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency	1	0.80	19	1.13
Philippine National Police	110	88.00	1,569	93.12
Multiple agencies	14	11.20	89	5.28
Unreported			1	0.06
Total	125	100	1,685	100

also observed that, as opposed to the Aquino administration, during which one child was killed alongside his father who was targeted by gunmen, the current administration has seen the targeting of teenagers

themselves after being accused of drug involvement. Thirty-one of the forty-eight teenagers killed under this administration were suspected drug personalities.

Majority of the victims did not have reported occupations for both administrations as well. Of the occupations reported (Aquino, 20 percent; Duterte, 19 percent), most had to do with law enforcement and barangay governance. Taken together, these two groups of occupations still only made up less than 10 percent of the total number of victims. Under the Aquino administration, twenty were current or former law enforcement agents when they were killed while four were barangay officials—of which four and two, respectively, were reportedly involved in illegal drugs. On the other hand, under the present administration, ninety-three out of the 142 current and former law enforcement agents killed and sixty-one out of the seventy-three current and former barangay officials killed had reported drug ties. One victim, who was a barangay councilor at the time of his death but served as a police officer before being relieved due to suspected involvement in the drug trade, was included in both counts. Compared to the past administration, a greater percentage of law enforcement agents and barangay officials killed under Duterte were said to be involved in drugs.

As for residence, majority also had unreported entries for both administrations (Aquino, 32 percent reported; Duterte, 33 percent reported). Of those with reported residences, most were from Metro Manila (Aquino, 6 percent; Duterte, 15 percent).

What Do We Know About the Killings?

A total of 1,230 drug-related incidents were recorded from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018. Of these, 872 incidents involved one death each while 358 involved multiple deaths.

Assailant Information

Under both administrations, most of the victims were killed by state agents (table 4). However, there was a 12 percent increase from the Aquino to the Duterte administration in the number of deaths perpetrated by law enforcers. During the Aquino administration, 110 out of the 125 victims of state agents were killed solely by members of the PNP (table 5); 112 out of these 125 were killed during planned operations while twelve were killed during unplanned operations and one was killed during an unspecified operation. Under the Duterte

TABLE 6. Items found with the body of those killed by different types of assailants

Items found	State agent		Nonstate agent		Unidentified assailants		Unknown assailants	
	Aquino (N=125)	Duterte (N=1,685)	Aquino (N=19)	Duterte (N=41)	Aquino (N=57)	Duterte (N=652)	Aquino (N=25)	Duterte (N=133)
Arms	105	1,121		2	4	29		1
Ammunition	52	321	2	1	5	130	3	16
Drug paraphernalia	20	156		2	1	30		7
Money	11	177			4	11	1	
Placard		1			5	39	1	65
Others	13	172	2		1	16	3	34

administration, on the other hand, 1,569 out of the 1,685 victims of state agents were killed by the police. Of those 1,685 victims, 1,423 were killed during planned operations, 199 were killed during unplanned operations, and 49 were killed during unspecified operations. As opposed to the Aquino administration, more were noticeably killed during unspecified and rather vague "operations" and encounters. The remaining fourteen victims were killed by law enforcement agents outside of state-sanctioned operations, incidents that were not recorded under the previous administration. An example of this is the killing of South Korean businessman Jee Ick-Joo by members of the PNP and the National Bureau of Investigation, whose highly publicized case of tokhang-for-ransom-turned-murder generated much public outrage. Jee's gruesome demise highlighted Oplan Tokhang's potential to be exploited by law enforcers for their own gain and pushed President Duterte to temporarily suspend his war on drugs.

Following state agents, the next two most common types of assailants for both administrations were unidentified (Aquino, 25 percent; Duterte, 26 percent) and unknown assailants (Aquino, 11 percent; Duterte, 5 percent). Although the percentages of those killed

by unidentified assailants under the two administrations are almost the same, twenty-nine (51 percent) out of the fifty-seven victims killed by this type of assailant under then President Aquino were actually targeted in a span of two months, from May to June of 2016, following Duterte's presidential win. A large part of these unidentified assailants were motorcycle-riding gunmen, with their victims comprising twenty-four out of the fifty-seven individuals killed under Aquino and 329 out of the 652 killed under Duterte. A number of individuals were also killed by nonstate agents, with about 8 percent killed under Aquino and less than 2 percent killed under Duterte.

The most commonly reported manner of killing was shooting, with 86 percent of victims under Aquino and 91 percent of victims under Duterte being shot to death. This result somewhat reflects the common police narrative that arose during this antidrug campaign of victims "retaliating" or "resisting arrest" (*nanlaban*), thereby instigating "shootouts" with law enforcers. The rest of the means of killing recorded comprised less than 1 percent of the incidents. In some cases, however, the victims were simply reported as "killed" without identifying the specific means (Aquino, 12 percent; Duterte, 8 percent).

Items Found with Victims

For both administrations, arms, specifically guns, were mostly found with victims killed by state agents (table 6). Arms are often cited by the police as evidence that the alleged drug personality resisted arrest. Some of the victims of unidentified assailants were found with ammunition and placards during the Aquino administration. Ammunition, such as loose bullets and grenades, were mostly found with victims of unidentified assailants during the Duterte administration. Victims of unknown assailants were mostly found with ammunition and other items during the Aquino administration, while under the Duterte administration, they were mostly found with placards. Victims with placards accusing them of ties to the illegal drug trade, often of drug pushing, and other crimes increased once Duterte was elected. There was even one anomalous case of a victim allegedly killed by the police but was found with a placard, leading that person's family to believe that he was summarily executed.

How Are the Killings Related to Illegal drugs?

Drug Involvement

During the Aquino administration, 191 were reportedly involved in the illegal drug trade, where 60 percent were alleged drug pushers, 33 percent were ambiguously linked to drugs, 4 percent were alleged high-profile targets, and 3 percent were alleged drug users. In contrast, 2,333 victims were reportedly involved in the illegal drug trade during the Duterte administration, where 53 percent were alleged drug pushers, 35 percent were ambiguously linked to drugs, 7 percent were high-profile targets, and 6 percent were alleged drug users. There was a slight increase in the percentage of victims simply labeled as "drug suspects," without any clear description of the nature of their involvement in the illegal drug trade. Even with Duterte's emphasis that he will catch the "big fish" of illegal drugs in the country, most victims are small-scale drug pushers, runners and couriers, and a large number who are only ambiguously linked to drugs, similar to the trend of those killed during the Aquino administration.

In the Aquino administration, majority of those reportedly involved in the drug trade had information linking them to illegal drugs prior to their deaths, where 122 were reportedly under investigation for illegal drug-related activities or were killed during antidrug operations, or both. Twelve of those with drug involvement had previously been arrested, convicted, or had surrendered for drug-related charges. Seven were reported to law enforcement agents by informants. Twenty-one appeared in some form of drug watchlist or wanted list for drug-related offenses. Nineteen were tagged as "drug suspects" or accused to be such without naming specific sources.

During the Duterte administration, majority of those reportedly involved in the drug trade had information linking them to illegal drugs prior to their deaths, in which 1,464 victims were reportedly under investigation for illegal drug-related activities or were killed during antidrug operations, or both. Those previously been arrested, convicted, or had surrendered for drug-related charges numbered 229. Eighty-six were reported to law enforcement agents by informants, 482 appeared in some form of drug watchlist or wanted list for drug-related offenses, and 151 were tagged as "drug suspects" or accused to be such without naming specific sources.

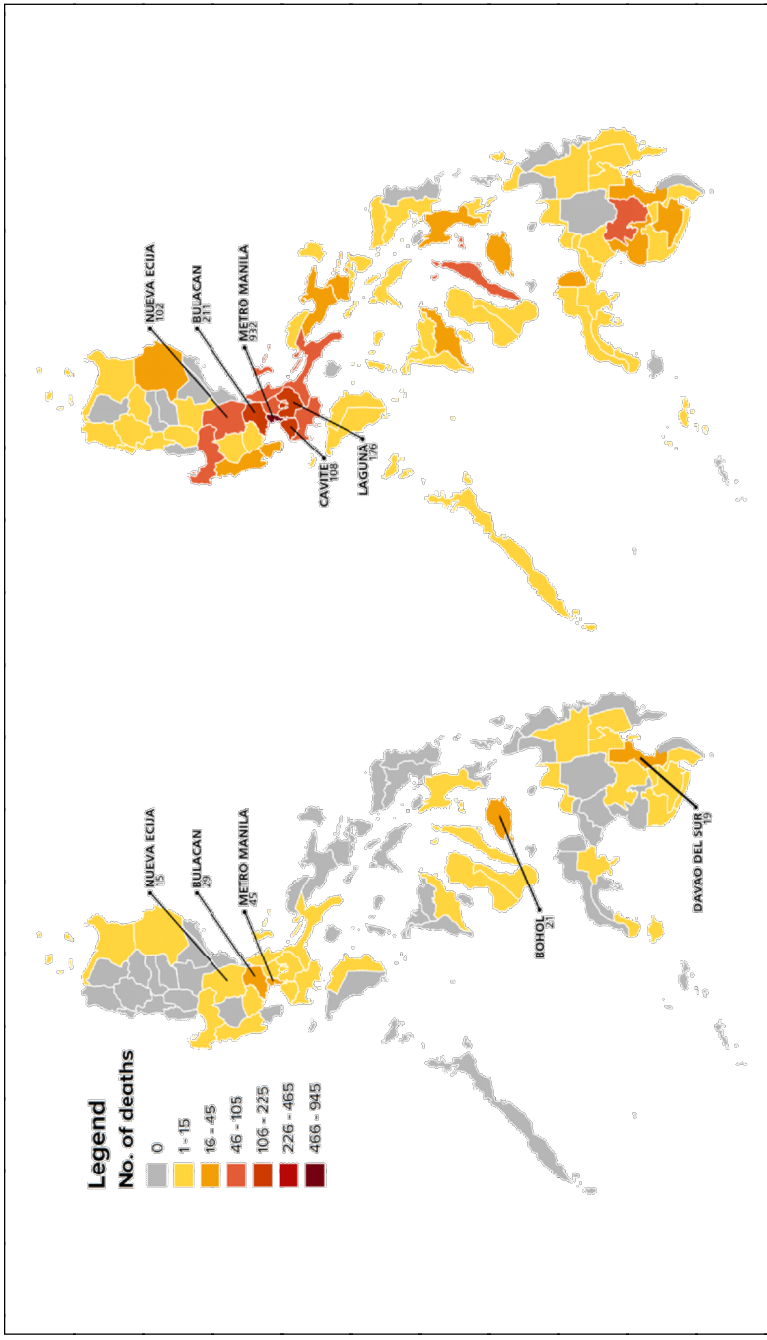

FIGURE 3. Heat maps of drug-related deaths in the Philippines during the Aquino (left) and Duterte (right) administrations. Maps by Ralph Chester D. Retamal.

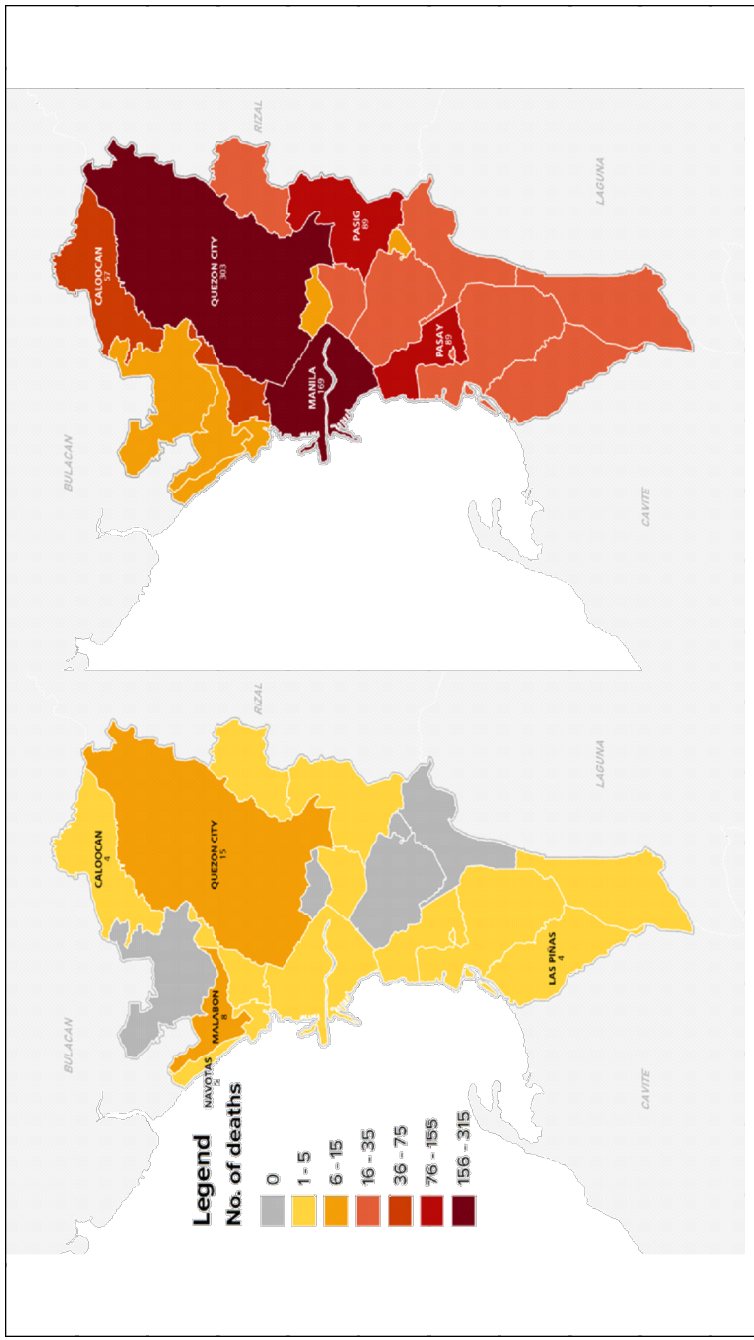

FIGURE 4. Heat maps of drug-related deaths in Metro Manila during the Aquino (left) and Duterte (right) administrations. Maps by Ralph Chester D. Retamal.

TABLE 7. Number of deaths across the Philippine regions (2014–2018)

Region	2014[a]	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
National Capital Region (NCR)	7	11	580	239	137	974
Region I (Ilocos)			47	9	5	61
Region II (Cagayan Valley)			13	33	8	54
Region III (Central Luzon)	4	14	169	116	124	427
Region IV-A (Calabarzon)	1	4	177	72	313	567
Region IV-B (Mimaropa)		3	1	2	8	14
Region V (Bicol)			41	10	10	61
Region VI (Western Visayas)		1	32	13	10	56
Region VII (Central Visayas)	2	6	87	16	53	164
Region VIII (Eastern Visayas)			24	13	7	44
Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula)			7	6	4	17
Region X (Northern Mindanao)	1		6	18	4	29
Region XI (Davao Region)	5	20	19	20	19	83
Region XII (Soccsksargen)		7	49	5	60	121
Region XIII (Caraga)			3	1		4
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)			12	2		14
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)			3	18	11	32
Total	20	66	1,270	593	773	2,722

Note: Fifteen entries were excluded for inexact or unreported dates and locations.

[a] The figures under 2014 represent recorded deaths from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014 only.

DRUG POSSESSION

During the Aquino administration, 112 of those reportedly involved in the drug trade were reportedly in possession of illegal drugs when they were killed. There were seventy-one unique entries involving drug possession, but only forty-one (58 percent) of those had complete details reported (i.e., type, amount, and value of illegal drugs). Sixty out of the seventy-one entries involved "shabu" or methamphetamine. In contrast, 1,108 of those reportedly involved in the drug trade were reportedly in possession of illegal drugs when they were killed during the Aquino administration. There were 836 unique entries involving drug possession, but only 618 (26 percent) of those had complete details reported; 736 out of the 836 entries involved "shabu" or methamphetamine.

Of those reportedly involved in the drug trade, 1,108 (47.49 percent) were reportedly in possession of illegal drugs when they were killed during the Duterte administration. There were 836 unique entries involving drug possession, but only 618 (26 percent) of those had complete details reported. Out of the 836 entries, 736 involved "shabu" or methamphetamine.

For both administrations, shabu was the most common drug involved, followed by marijuana, mostly packed in small sachets. From the type and amount of drugs found, the targets of the assailants are not big time drug lords or drug den owners; most are just small-time pushers. High-end drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and ecstasy were never found in any incident.

When and Where Did These Killings Happen?

Significant events during the "highs" and "lows" of drug-related killings were plotted together. Whenever Duterte has a pronouncement encouraging state forces to continue the war against drugs, the number of deaths increase. In contrast to the "highs," the number of deaths has a tendency to drop when a controversial case (e.g., Kian Loyd delos Santos and Carl Arnaiz) is brought out to the public.

DAY OF THE WEEK

In the Aquino administration, the highest number of killings occurred on Thursdays. However, fourteen cases were excluded in this day-of-the-week analysis because their exact dates were not reported. During the Duterte administration, most of the killings happened on

TABLE 8. Victim categories for the Aquino and Duterte administrations

Category	Aquino (N=226)		Duterte (N=2,511)	
	Count	% out of the total no. of deaths	Count	% out of the total no. of deaths
Armed accomplice	2	0.88	17	0.68
Body Dump	19	8.41	116	4.62
Collateral damage	4	1.77	67	2.67
Contested account	1	0.44	125	4.98
Highly publicized case	5	2.21	77	3.07
Mistaken identity			11	0.44
Officer killed in action	9	3.98	21	0.84
Victims of drug suspects	8	3.54	47	1.87

Wednesdays. However, forty-seven cases were excluded in this day-of-the-week analysis because their exact dates were not reported.

TIME OF INCIDENT

For the Aquino administration, 77 percent of the incidents included time indicators. Seventy-two were killed during the day, and 102 were killed during the night. In comparison, 87 percent of the incidents during the Duterte administration included time indicators. Those killed during the day numbered 628, and 1,543 were killed during the night. Killings had the tendency to peak mid-week (Tuesdays to Thursdays) and taper off during the weekend.

LOCATION OF THE INCIDENT

In both administrations, Metro Manila had the highest number of drug-related deaths (table 7), followed by Bulacan (figure 3). In Metro Manila, Quezon City (fifteen) had the highest number of killings, followed by Malabon (eight), Navotas (five), and Caloocan (four), during the Aquino administration (figure 4). For the Duterte administration, Quezon City (303) had the highest number of killings, followed by Manila (169), Pasay (eighty-nine), and Pasig City (eighty-nine), in Metro Manila (figure 4). The Manila-centric distribution of deaths is also a result of *Inquirer*'s geographic bias.

Victim Categories

While encoding, we noticed themes and trends in some of the cases, which represent narratives used in debates for or against Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs. Aside from counting the number of deaths, we decided to add a descriptive aspect in the methodology, which is also reflected in the additional notes section. These themes were categorized as shown in table 8. Although each of these cases make up 5 percent and below of the total number of deaths, there is almost a 100 percent increase per category from the Aquino to the Duterte administration.

One of the most talked about consequences of the Duterte administration's antidrug campaign are the collateral damage victims, who are mostly minors, aged eighteen and below. The Duterte administration calls those caught between the crossfire during antidrug operations as "collateral damage," treating these individuals as an unavoidable by product of the campaign to clean the country of illegal drugs. But a number of those who were considered as "collateral damage" were accidentally there during the incident, and instead of not taking responsibility for their deaths, the agents could still have avoided their accidental deaths (Coady 2008). Labeling them simply as collateral damage implies that these deaths are unavoidable consequences which are often seen as "a very small part of a big picture" (Coady 2008, 133), making it seem "to palliate the suffering related to it, and makes one forget that what it actually refers to are humans, mostly innocents, who are being harmed or even killed in an armed conflict" (Schwenkenbecher 2014, 94). When Duterte's antidrug campaign reached international attention, he himself stated that civilians caught in the war on drugs are collateral damage (Al-Jazeera 2016). In the interview, President Duterte likened the situation to

civilians killed during the Vietnam and Afghan war, where he said that collateral damage is not a criminal liability and cannot be avoided, since the state agents need to protect themselves (Al-Jazeera 2016). There were a total of twenty-one officers killed in action, which is only a third of collateral damage deaths.

Aside from the increase of collateral damage deaths, mistaken identity cases were only reported during the Duterte administration. It is similar to collateral damage in a way where both of them are not the actual targets. Mistaken identity cases are those who were targeted because they were initially labeled as some other drug suspect. Collateral damage and mistaken identity cases are often (but not mutually exclusive) contested accounts. As we encoded, there were 157 reported cases with contestations from relatives and witnesses. This does not include contested accounts which were not reported in the news article.

Victims of unknown assailants, which are mostly body dumps, increased during the Duterte administration as well, even before he has stepped into office. His pronouncements, which gives a "license" for anyone to kill alleged drug personalities, has given rise to unknown and unidentified assailants. Placards, mostly found with the bodies during the early parts of the antidrug campaign, accuse the victims of being a pusher, along with other crimes associated with drug use. These people, confirmed drug suspect or not, did not even go through a buy-bust operation, or an investigation, which respects their basic human rights.

Beyond the total tally of deaths, what caught people's attention are the highly publicized cases featuring controversial and contested deaths. The nature of these publicized deaths range from high-profile targets to deaths of minors who were wrongly accused. Jee Ick Joo's death in the first year of Duterte's term created so much attention, the President halted drug-related operations of the PNP. Another case is Kian delos Santos's death which circulated in the news for many months. Different groups have questioned the testimony given by the police, and eventually finding out that delos Santos was set up by the police through a CCTV footage. The Parojinog massacre, which almost wiped out an entire family, is an example of a highly publicized case of big-time personalities involved in the illegal drug trade. These events led to a drop in the number of deaths in the succeeding months after being publicized, and after the outcry died down, it eventually rose again.

This administration has used the reason that drug suspects cause a lot of crime to justify their method of eradicating illegal drugs in the country. We encoded reported cases of victims of drug suspects to compare it against the deaths of the war against drugs. The number of deaths related to the antidrug campaign outnumbers those who died in the hands of drug suspects. This is not to belittle or to discredit the deaths of these victims, which were often violently killed. Even those included in the number of deaths of alleged drug suspects are not confirmed to be involved in the illegal drug trade.

Duterte's war on drugs, along with the outcry from those left behind and their supporters, reached international attention, bringing the Philippines to international investigation. Although the investigation is still ongoing, several factors have been hindering its progress, including the Philippines' withdrawal from the International Criminal Court last March 2019, the administration's counterattack against those who question them, and the strong support of many Filipinos to Duterte despite the staggering number of killings.

CONCLUSION

We have presented a methodology of recording drug-related deaths that can easily be replicated to create a more encompassing dataset, hopefully including those localities outside of Metro Manila. The database's priority is not the total number of deaths alone, but as well as the details surrounding the deaths, which can be used to further explain what is happening in the country right now. Although it has a more conservative total number of deaths than other databases, it still reflects the trends seen in the Drug Archive and in other antidrug campaign databases, where there are thousands of lives being killed and labeled as drug personalities without due process.

Unlike other databases which only record current drug-related deaths, the comparison of trends between the Aquino and the Duterte administration clearly shows the exponential increase of drug-related killings in the present government. Supporters of the administration have been justifying the drug war by claiming that it has been going on even in the past administrations while not even looking at the fact that the number of deaths has increased in exponential numbers, proving that this is more than just a continuation of the government's action against the illegal drug trade. Although the police has been the main assailant of drug-related deaths for both administrations, the dramatic

increase of deaths under police operations can be observed during the Duterte administration, where they are ordered by the president to eradicate drug suspects. In the articles, the common reason why the policemen kill the suspects is because of self-defense, saying that the drug suspect "retaliated" or "engaged the police in a shootout." Aside from policemen, the second major assailant type are the unidentified assailants, who are dominantly motorcycle-riding gunmen. Unidentified assailants also existed during the past administration, but also increased exponentially during the Duterte administration. With Duterte encouraging people to get rid of drug suspects, a number of people took the task into their own hands, since it was the president who gave the "license" to kill.

Through this exercise of counting the deaths using news accounts, we also observed how poorly drug-related deaths were being reported. Confusion in encoding mostly stems from misspelled names of people and barangays, to different versions of what exactly happened in the incident. Aside from typographical errors, a lot of articles only state the victim's name and their manner of death, from accounts mostly coming from the perspective of the police officers in charge of the cases. That is why counting them matters. If their deaths are not part of a count, it would appear from journalistic reports that their deaths, though newsworthy enough, are no different from those hit by a truck or struck by a lightning. The sense of injustice conveyed by the violence of their demise is often left out of the news article. There are only a few cases where the article cites the side of the family of the victim or other witnesses to the incident, which are often written in great detail.

Limitations

Even as we try to be inclusive, there are details that the database has yet to capture. For one, we have only utilized one news publication as our source of information, which most likely does not, or cannot, report all deaths, especially those which happened in the fringes of the countryside. Aside from its geographic bias, some follow-up articles report different details from initial reports. Aside from different details, some articles report misspelled names and locations.

Since the database focuses on the dead victims, information on drug personalities who are still alive are not recorded. Incidences where there are no dead victims but report confiscated drugs and arrested drug personalities were also not included.

Human error, as mentioned in the earlier section, is one of the challenges in making the database. In evaluating what options should be chosen per variable, the encoders still use their own judgement, which sometimes leads to confusion. This is remedied by making sure the encoders discuss these confusing information with one another to arrive at a consensus. Even though we tried to be inclusive, there are still details that cannot be encompassed by the options in the database.

Recommendations

The intention of the project is to be able to provide a methodology in counting drug-related deaths in the Philippines, which is why we recommend for other institutions to adopt this method. We hope that the data encoded will be more inclusive as other institutions or research centers will take on the methodology. For example, universities in the provinces can encode deaths not mentioned in national dailies.

For now, we get information from newspapers, but the database can also be utilized for police records, interviews, news reports, among others.

Acknowledgement

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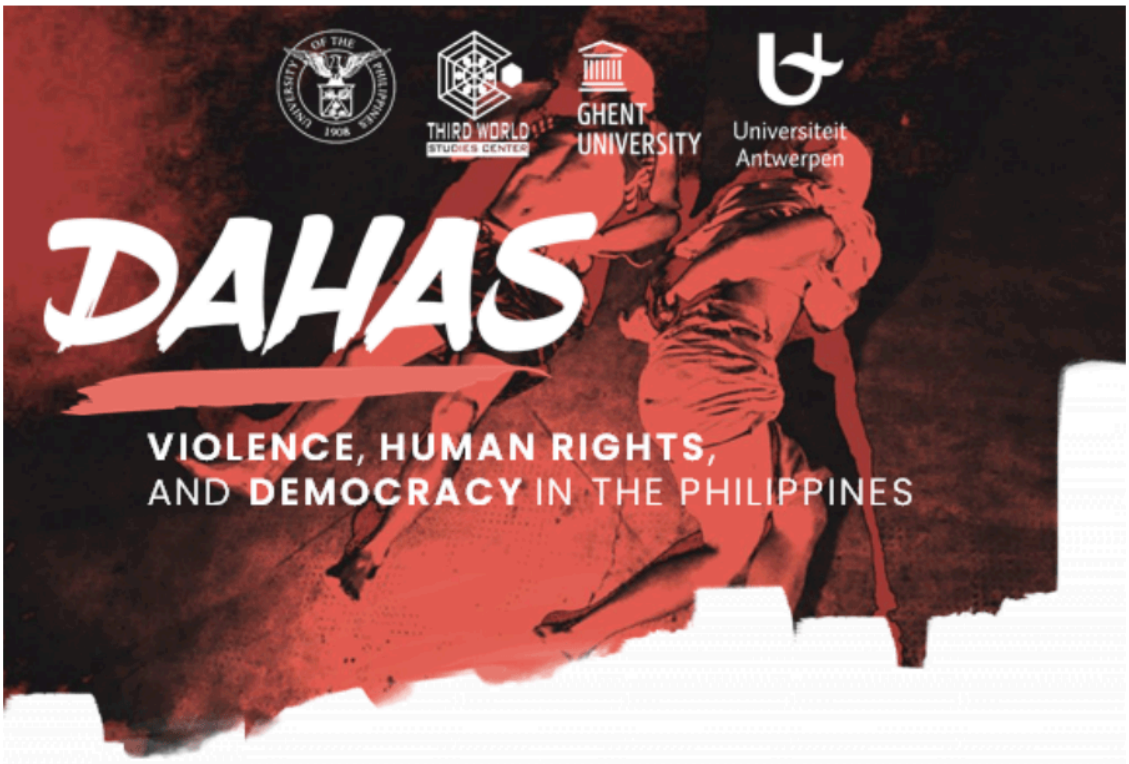

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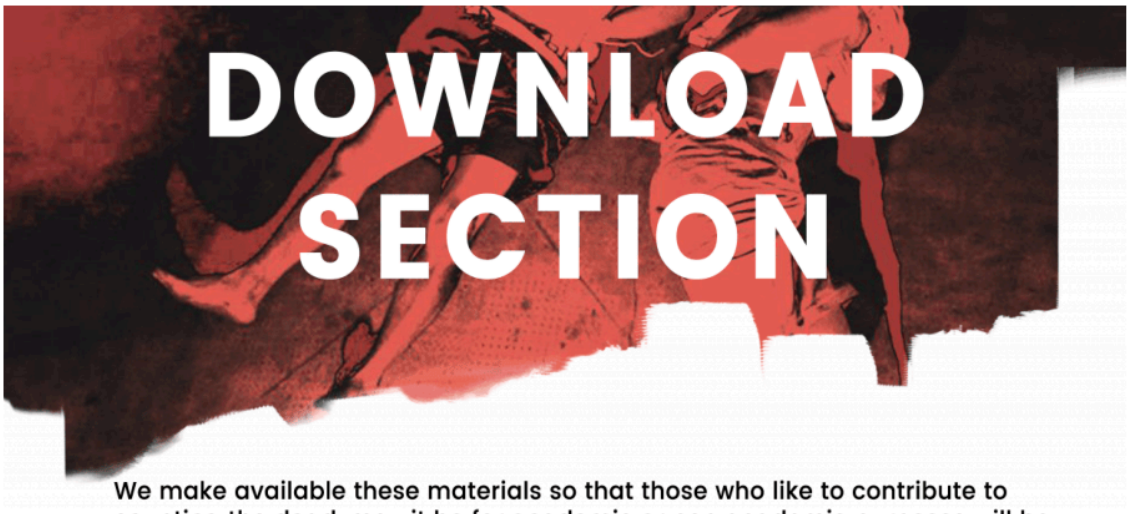

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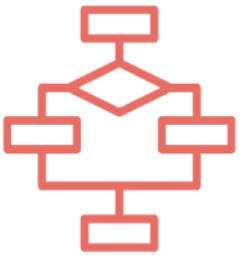

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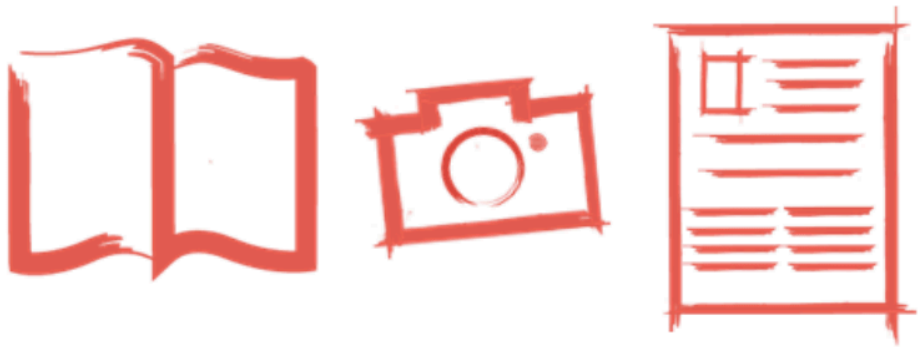

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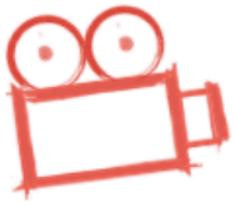

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