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Research Report

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Making Money Out of People's Misery: Has Disaster Capitalism Taken Over Post-Haiyan Philippines?

In the age of neoliberal globalization, it is no longer surprising that even the most distressing situations can be a source of profit. The term “disaster capitalism” has been used to describe the global pattern of big businesses profiting from disasters. This was observed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the United States, Indian Ocean Tsunami in South and Southeast Asia, and the Haiti earthquake. The aftermath of super typhoon Haiyan provides some indications of disaster capitalism at work. However, there are also distinct characteristics in the post-Haiyan case. This critical essay argues that disaster capitalism in the Philippines has specific nuances that mirror the pre-existing characteristics of the Philippine political economy, which is a combination of patronage politics and neoliberal policies. The article also highlights the role of people's movements in resistance and efforts of insulating the country from disaster capitalism.

Keywords: disaster capitalism; neoliberalism; capitalism; political economy; disasters; resistance

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No Inevitabilities. (Photo by Haru Sabijon, Caelestis Productions Inc., Philippine Red Cross)

INTRODUCTION

From profiting in refugee camps to making money out of wars, the nature of today's unbridled capitalism no longer exempts any situation from being treated as business. Thus, it is no longer surprising that even the most distressing situations can be a source of profit. Disasters are very much part of this trend. As eloquently described in Naomi Klein's book *Shock Doctrine*, disaster capitalism is an "orchestrated raid on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities" (Klein 2007:6). Disasters open up opportunities for big corporations to profit from the people's devastated lives.

This phenomenon is experienced in developed and developing countries alike. In Sri Lanka, the Arugam Bay project after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami developed coastal areas for tourism. The government of Sri Lanka implemented the "buffer zone" policy, which prohibits people from returning to their previous dwelling but allows hotels and resorts to continue their operations and even expand their establishments. New Orleans, after Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, offers similar stories of privatization where the government contracted out the rehabilitation and reconstruction process to private service providers. Adams vividly described this phenomenon in *Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith*: "In the end, they were able to profit from human tragedy, turning sorrows into opportunities for capital investment in what Naomi Klein calls a form of disaster capitalism" (Adams 2013:7). Taken together, these examples illustrate the ubiquity of disaster capitalism in neoliberal times.

While Klein's description of disaster capitalism provides a compelling description of the nature of capital in vulnerable social circumstances, it also warrants a close and systemic empirical investigation, especially in the context of the Philippines. In this article, I examine the extent to which disaster capitalism is manifest in areas hit by Typhoon Haiyan. In particular, I examine the similarities and distinctiveness of the Philippine

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context in comparison to other post-disaster contexts where disaster capitalism unfolded. Based on key informant interviews, documentary analysis, and tracking of news reports, I argue that disaster capitalism in the Philippines have particularities that mirror the pre-existing characteristics of the Philippine political economy, which is a combination of patronage and neoliberal policies. While the findings affirm Klein's observations about the nature of capital in volatile social contexts, I also argue that disaster capitalism's precise empirical manifestations vary depending on the context.

This article is structured in four sections. The first section describes the character of today's unbridled neoliberal capitalism and the ways in which it engages in disaster profiteering. The next section presents the empirical manifestations of disaster capitalism in developed and developing countries and similarities in the post-Haiyan Philippines. The third section zooms in to post-Haiyan Philippines and the broad indications of disaster capitalism in the affected areas. The last section presents the nuances of the phenomenon in the Philippines and its departures from the standard characterization of disaster capitalism. It also presents the role of people's movements in insulating the country from such profit making schemes.

UNBRIDLED CAPITALISM

Scholars refer to our times as the era of unbridled neoliberal capitalism. Since the Reagan-Thatcher era, the global political economy has been structured in such a way that there will be less barriers to a freer movement of goods, resources, and enterprises among economies in a bid to always find cheaper resources to maximize profits and efficiency (Shah 2010). This is also followed by the implementation of structural adjustment programs that open up economies of poorer countries to conditional ties of international financial institutions and developed countries, primarily to restructure their economies and eliminate the barriers (Shah 2013).

Neoliberalism is the term used to describe these developments. While this concept has been used in various ways, its key characteristics are as follows: First, as a set of *economic principles*, neoliberalism considers human well-being as best advanced by "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework

characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (Harvey 2005:2). In this context, the role of the state is to keep its interventions “to a bare minimum” to avoid distortions in the market and allow free flow of goods and services without hindrances. Klein argues that such principle explains why entrepreneurs or businessmen, driven by profit, are always more efficient than the state, even in the context of disaster response (Klein 2007:288). This implies that inefficiencies in the state’s bureaucracy could be resolved by private sector interventions and thus, justifies the latter.

Second, as a *policy direction*, neoliberalism promotes private sector as key engine of development. This emerged from the 1980s debt crisis, which was understood by many as a result of overreliance on the state that led to the pursuit of another development model that emphasized the key role of the private sector (Adams 1999:43). Policies based on the neoliberal framework of free market and promoting the role of private sector “have been justified by the dominant world view of the past decades that wealth would trickle down to the poor and marginalized through higher economic growth” (IBON International 2013:1). As a result, big corporations are also now major players in different international development processes such as in the United Nations.

Third, by *implication*, neoliberalism promotes “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2005:178). Assets and wealth are transferred “from the mass of the population towards the upper classes or from vulnerable to richer countries” (Harvey 2006:153). Practices of accumulation occur through expansion of wage labor in industry and agriculture while dispossession happens through the loss of rights, dignity, sustainable ecological practices, environmental rights, and the life, as the basis for a unified oppositional politics (Harvey 2005:178).

The concept of disaster capitalism is a derivative of the neoliberal regime. As an *economic principle*, disaster capitalism is a term used to describe the global pattern of big businesses profiting from disasters—whether climate or war-related. Klein described cases of profit making by privatizing the disaster responses in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka thus, disasters themselves become the new markets (Klein 2007:13). This “potential market” is comprised of acutely vulnerable disaster-affected communities

suffering from post-disaster trauma (Rowlands 2013). Gotham also explained, “In shifting emergency management responsibilities from government to market, privatization addresses disaster victims not as citizens and members of an aggrieved community but as atomized customers, clients, and consumers” (Gotham 2012:635).

The role of the state in disaster response in a neoliberal regime is minimal and secondary compare to the private sector’s primary role. This is in line with the neoliberal principle that governments should not intervene as to not to interrupt the market. However, the state still plays a role in disaster capitalism by facilitating reforms that would create the “markets” for the businesses (Harvey 2005:2). These reforms are made possible by the crisis or the “*shock*” in the aftermath of a disaster. Klein described, “[W]aiting for a major crisis, then selling off pieces of the state to private players while citizens were still reeling from the shock, then quickly making the “reforms” permanent” (Klein 2007:6).

As a *policy direction*, the neoliberal paradigm is placing weight on the role of the private sector, particularly of corporations, in disaster response and rehabilitation. Corporate interventions in disasters are often linked to the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). White argues that the role of corporations in disaster response has been increasing in on-the-ground efforts often partnering with local actors since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami (White 2012:6). “The reasons for the rise in corporate action are multifold but generally stem from an expanded understanding of the roles and responsibilities of business in a fully globalized society,” (White 2012:6) he added. This does not only allow corporations to intervene and translate disasters into markets, but this also justifies and hides the nature of corporations to make profits. This way, businesses profit from disasters through being “socially responsible” (Collingsworth 2005:264). This was seen in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 with Pfizer as the highest contributor, along with Coca-Cola, General Electric and ExxonMobil (White 2012:6).

By *implication*, dispossession in disaster situations is being exacerbated by the entry of businesses and pursuit of elite interests. Neoliberalism does not just allow free flow of goods and resources among economies, but it also redistributes and re-establishes “the conditions for capital accumulation and restored the power of economic elites” (Harvey

2005:19). With freedom as one of its central values, neoliberalism promotes freedom of “private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations and financial capital” but at the expense of the people (Harvey 2005:7). This implies freedom of the economic elite to further dispossess—the public and the people in pursuit of profit accumulation.

The accumulation of power during disasters is determined by level of vulnerabilities. Oftentimes, vulnerabilities of populations are understood in the scale of impact and devastation of natural disasters to their lives—the larger the natural physical phenomenon and the larger the impact, the more vulnerable they are. For Bankoff, this departs from the wider aspect of disaster vulnerabilities as historical and social results (Bankoff 2001:24). People’s vulnerability to disasters is actually the result of a history of marginalization and oppression. Vulnerable people are not just the most at risk because of exposure to hazards but also because their lives, as a result of societal marginalization are always on emergency (Bankoff 2001:25). Disaster capitalism happens to devastated areas with vulnerable populations. Naomi Klein uses the idea of “shock” to explain vulnerabilities. It was right after disasters that the population is most vulnerable thus, more susceptible to major political and economic reforms. These reforms create the environment for wealth and power accumulation.

EMPIRICAL MANIFESTATIONS

There are a number of scholarly studies that lend evidence to the disaster capitalism thesis. Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine*, for example, has presented cases of disaster profiteering in both developing and developed countries—two of which are considered the most destructive calamities in history. The first of which was the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that resulted from a magnitude 9 earthquake. The tsunami did not just affect eleven countries with almost 250,000 casualties and left 2.5 million people homeless throughout the region, but also exposed the long before tourism plans of the Sri Lankan government to its coastal areas. Arugam Bay in Sri Lanka was the government’s showcase of “build back better” after the tsunami. Before the tsunami, the bay was occupied by fishing people who depend on the coastline for livelihood and they coexists with some small hotels and resorts for tourists. However, after the tsunami, the

government has declared the coastlines as “buffer zones” such that local folk were prohibited from returning to their houses while the hotels and resorts were allowed to stay and even expand their establishments. The tsunami provided the government the opportunity to expedite its plans to privatize Sri Lanka’s coastal areas. While the people struggle to recover from the disaster, the corporations and local elites, as Klein describes, took advantage of the situation to reap profits (Klein 2007:394).

The following year, another catastrophe has caught the world’s attention and was considered one of the five deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. Hurricane Katrina that struck the gulf coast but mostly affecting New Orleans in 2005 left thousands of people displaced from their homes and furthermore worsened their conditions when the government contracted out the recovery process to private corporations. Disaster response was contracted out to private service providers by the federal government represented by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This act was in line with the neoliberal principle of eliminating government bureaucracy, waste and fraud while promoting values of freedom and efficiency (Gotham 2012:633). However, what happened next was the opposite. Adams described,

“These arrangements turned disaster recovery into a for-profit endeavor that enabled private companies to obtain government relief funds while offering little accountability to the people for whom these funds were intended. They allowed banks to offer loans that drove up debt among victims while generating interest-based returns for lenders. They allowed insurance companies to evade culpability when they refused to pay for damages but extract further insurance payments from people whose homes could no longer be inhabited. Finally, they ensured that real recovery would be left up to local volunteers, churches and nonprofit charities.”

(Adams 2013:5)

As an *economic principle*, Klein described these changes as form of “reconstruction” that takes advantage from disasters through erasing what was left in the public sphere and of the role of the government then move to replacing it with the profit-making mantra of privatization (Klein 2007:8). The clearing of the Arugam Bay coastlines in Sri Lanka

through the buffer zone policy to give way to tourism businesses and the FEMA sub-contracting of rehabilitation services to private corporations post-Katrina tells us that disasters have the potential for businesses to create more profits, particularly in the reconstruction phase.

In terms of *policy direction*, there was deep involvement of the private sector in responding to the rehabilitation phase while role of the government was limited. Chandrika Kumaratunga, the Sri Lankan President entrusted the post-tsunami rehabilitation “to the country’s most powerful business executives from banking and industry” (Klein 2007:396). Similarly, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, privatization of response was manifest in the government’s action to contract out emergency management operations “to large retailers, such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot, to provide water, ice, and critical supplies during crises” (Gotham 2012:639).

By *implication*, privatization of disaster response has no mechanism to hold private companies accountable in providing services to the people. Instead, it allows private companies to use public resources to forward profit-making agendas (Gotham 2012:635). This means dispossession and disempowerment to the affected populations. As in the case of post-tsunami Sri Lanka, dispossession was through a legalized “land grabbing” by the government in favor of private corporations and expediting long-before plans of privatization. Klein described, “In a way, the second tsunami was just a particularly shocking dose of economic shock therapy: because the storm did such an effective job of clearing the beach, a process of displacement and gentrification that would normally unfold over years took place in a matter of days or weeks” (Klein 2007:401).

The empirical evidence of profiteering seen in the aftermath of major disasters suggests that free market has been quick to expropriate profit from a world increasingly shaped by disasters. In both cases (in Sri Lanka and New Orleans), disaster has provided the opportunity to expedite neoliberal policies and reforms favoring political elites and corporations. This has resulted to further dispossession of the vulnerable populations. The post-Haiyan scenario shares similarities from the two cases, but, as discussed in the following sections, also has some distinct qualities.

DISASTER CAPITALISM IN POST-HAIYAN PHILIPPINES: BROAD INDICATIONS

Super Typhoon Haiyan (or locally know as Yolanda) hit Central Philippines on the 8th of November 2013. It is considered the strongest typhoon on record in recent history (National Economic and Development Authority 2013:1). An estimated of twelve million people (or 2.6 million families) were affected and about 6,000 recorded casualties (National Economic and Development Authority 2013:2-3). In response, the Philippine government through the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) released a rehabilitation blueprint—the Recovery Assistance on Yolanda (RAY). The said rehabilitation plan will be managed and coordinated by the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (OPARR) then headed by Senator Panfilo “Ping” Lacson. According to the document, “RAY is the Government’s strategic plan to guide the recovery and reconstruction of the economy, lives, and livelihoods in the affected areas” (National Economic and Development Authority 2013:1). The program follows the principle of “build back better” that aims to restore socio-economic conditions of the people and create higher level of resiliency (National Economic and Development Authority 2013:1).

But almost a year since the super typhoon, survivors in Central Philippines are still struggling to recover and bring back their pre-Haiyan lives. This is evident in the testimonies of survivors in comparing their lives before and after the typhoon, as well as media reports. Kate Hodal wrote in *The Guardian*:

“Although Filipino politicians have called for a probe into the national government’s disaster response, President Aquino has said he stands by Soliman and the DSWD. Full reconstruction and rehabilitation will take years, and there are glimmers of growth in Tacloban City – roughly 90 percent of its 240,000 residents are back, says Romualdez; the streets are teeming with markets, new shops and restaurants (some of them named “Haiyan”); and the Pope’s visit in January will buoy spirits. But a year on, much of the hope one might expect to see is still not present.”

(Hodal 2014)

People’s organizations and non-government actors, particularly affiliated with People Surge have been vigilant against RAY’S tendency to privilege the private sector in the recovery process. For this critical essay, I interviewed ten representatives of people and non-government organizations and reviewed policy documents published by think tanks such as IBON Foundation, the NEDA-proposed RAY program and OPARR statements. I also analyzed news articles and academic materials—all of which aim to monitor the character of the recovery process. I chose to focus on People Surge-affiliated mass organizations and their support non-government organization’s perspectives on disaster capitalism because the alliance has been very vocal in criticizing the government’s poor response and rehabilitation plans. This is also to bring out the local population’s critical take on the private sector’s central role

Table 1: List of Respondents

ORGANIZATION	TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	RESPONDENT, POSITION	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC)	NGO	Owen Migraso, Eastern Visayas Field Coordinator	April 16, 2015
Citizens’ Disaster Response Center (CDRC)	NGO	Carlos Padolina, Deputy Executive Director	April 16, 2015
People Surge	Alliance	Marissa Cabaljao, Spokesperson	April 20, 2015
League of Filipino Students (LFS)- Tacloban	People’s Organization	Cyrene Camposano	June 2, 2015
Katrabaho	People’s Organization	Napoleon Escalona, Chairperson	June 2, 2015
Kusog*	People’s Organization	Auring, officer Norma, member Lydia, member Lorenzo, member	July 7, 2015
Kadamay-Tacloban	People’s Organization	Frank Falgera, Secretary General	July 7, 2015

* Not their real names because respondents requested anonymity.

in the recovery process and examine the extent to which local accounts conform to Klein's conceptualization of disaster capitalism. Table 1 provides the list of organizations interviewed for this project.

For Owen Migraso, coordinator for Eastern Visayas of the Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC), RAY appears to use Haiyan as a context to promote NEDA's principles of private sector-led development. He said:

“Ginamit yung Yolanda as venue ng mga private corporations para maitulak pa yung interes nila. Yung mga long term plans nila nung simula pa ay napabilis ang implementation dahil nga vulnerable yung ekonomiya, vulnerable yung communities, hindi masyadong malakas ang resistance kasi yun nga—iba pa yung pangangailangan ng communities. Ang nangyari, minaximize ng mga private corporations tapos nagbukas din ang gobyerno ng mga programs and policies nila, example yung Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda (RAY) at Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan (CRRP) para mag-facilitate na magpabilis ng mga projects na yun. Yun yung ano—ma-streamline yung mga processes, yung housing projects, mga commercial establishments na hindi na dadaan sa red tape. Mas efficient na process sa mga PPPs, mga public-private-partnerships. Yung recovery and rehabilitation project ng government ay hindi talaga tumugon sa pangangailangan ng communities. In fact, hanggang ngayon marami pang communities sa region 6 and 8—hindi ko alam sa region 7 pero sabi sa mga reports lahat ng mga communities na naapektuhan ng Yolanda ay hindi pa rin nakabangon. Tapos kung may mga efforts man ang government, mapa-livelihood or shelter ay very—barya lang, barya-barya lang talaga. Tapos pinagkakitaan pa sila, example dun sa isang bayan sa Iloilo, sa Estancia, yung bunkhouse nila inextend ng inextend. May mga bumalik na sa mga bahay nila pero may pinalipat ulit sa bunkhouse para daw—kasi kumikita yung may-ari ng lupa. Umuupa ang gobyerno sa lupa na yun.”

[Yolanda (Haiyan) is being used as a venue of private corporations to push their own interests. Implementations of their long-term plans are being expedited because the economy is vulnerable, communities are vulnerable, and there is even weak resistance because communities are still in the emergency phase. So what happened was, private corporations maximized

the opportunity and the government also opened programs and policies, for example is Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda (RAY) and Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan (CRRP) to facilitate and expedite those projects. This is to streamline processes like the housing projects, commercial establishments—to avoid red tape, and create a more efficient process for public private partnerships (PPP). The government’s recovery and rehabilitation projects did not really address the needs of the communities. In fact, until now in many communities in region 6 and 8—I’m not sure in region 7 but reports are saying that these affected communities are still far from recovery. If there are any efforts of the government like livelihood or shelter—it’s really very minimal. In fact, the government is even profiting from such devastations, for example is the extension of the bunkhouse projects in Estancia, Iloilo. There were people who already returned to their previous dwellings but there were also some who were asked to move again in the bunkhouses—because the landowner is actually profiting from this arrangement. The government is renting the land]

(Owen Migraso, Center for Environmental Concerns)

In his narrative, Owen identifies several dimensions of disaster capitalism in practice. First relates to the opportunity Haiyan provided for the government to attract private sector investments without the hassles of red tape. Because of the situation’s urgency, the government had a free hand in streamlining processes for opening up businesses and launching public-private partnerships in an expedited manner. Second, Owen also points to the “profiting over misery” dimension of the recovery process, as in the case of bunkhouses where private owners serve to benefit from the rent paid by the government. IBON Foundation affirms Owen’s observations, arguing that RAY does not present a concrete rehabilitation plan. Instead, it largely depends on the private sector “to identify, plan and implement their choice of projects, which are oftentimes not based on the actual needs of the people but only on the project’s profitability” (IBON Foundation 2014:6). Thus, in *economic principles*, the Philippines’ rehabilitation plan has some indications of disaster capitalism, as far as putting the private sector in the front seat of recovery is concerned.

In terms of *policy direction*, OPARR made it clear that recovery and rehabilitation will be a private sector-led process. Then “rehabilitation

czar,” Panfilo “Ping” Lacson said, “The direction I want to pursue is clear—to maximize the participation of the private sector, because the government really can’t do this alone. And their response has been so enthusiastic,” he said (in Troilo 2014). Different private corporations are now taking part in the recovery and rehabilitation process, mostly through the corporate social responsibility principle. Among the different private sector that expressed interests are PLDT-Smart Foundation, Aboitiz Group Foundation, Insular Foundation, Metrobank Foundation, Globe Telecom, Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), AyalaLand, BDO Foundation, Jollibee-Mang Inasal, International Container Terminal Services Inc., Robinsons Land Corp., ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation, SM Group of Companies among others (OPARR 2014:15). An overwhelming number of humanitarian organizations also poured in help in different affected areas.

“Tapos sa pagse-survey namin kahit sa mga communities na hindi sakop ng projects namin, mga NGOs at INGOs pa yung may papel sa recovery at mga private corporations. Napansin din namin yan sa mga coordinating bodies sa UN-OCHA, NHA, DSWD na mas malaki ang presence ng mga INGOs and NGOs. Sila pa yung mas may active na papel sa recovery efforts mula sa emergency hanggang ngayon sa reconstruction phase.”

[In our survey in other communities that are not really covered by our project, we have learned that NGOs, INGOs and private corporations initiated the different recovery efforts. We have also observed in different coordinating bodies like in UN-OCHA, NHA and DSWD the increasing role and presence of NGOs and INGOs. They have a more active role in the recovery efforts from the emergency to the reconstruction phase.]

(Owen Migraso, Center for Environmental Concerns).

“Yung itsura nung mga humanitarian na tulong ng corporations. Yun na bale ang itsura nung capitalism na tinatawag natin post-disaster. At saka puro NGO rin naman ang tumutulong. Kung hindi man NGO ng mga corporations, yung mga Ayala Foundation, GMA Foundation. Mga international NGOs talaga.”

[Humanitarian aid by corporations can also be considered as the face of capitalism post-disaster. Initiatives are coming from NGOs—NGOs of corporations like Ayala Foundation, GMA Foundation. International NGOs are also the ones giving assistance here.]

(Cyrene Camposano, League of Filipino Students-Tacloban).

The Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC) and CEC, non-government actors with different initiatives and efforts in the Haiyan-affected areas, observe the visibility of international NGOs and local corporate foundations rather than with the government's response. The League of Filipino Students (LFS)-Tacloban also explained that aid from corporations could also be considered a form of disaster capitalism because it entails conditional ties.

By *implication*, the private sector-led disaster response in post-Haiyan further enforces accumulation by dispossession. In practice, this is observed in the 40-meter "No Dwelling Zone" policy announced three months after the super typhoon. The said policy, originally called "No Build Zone" firstly announced in December 2013, was changed to "No Dwelling Zone" to distinguish between "safe" and "unsafe" zones, according to Lacson (OPARR 2014). However, this has become doubtful among people and non-government organizations because establishments will still be allowed while the local folk's dwellings need to be demolished and relocated to another place, possibly far from their work.

"Tapos nangyari din, ang naging tugon ng gobyerno yung pag-declare ng mga "no build zone" areas lalo na sa mga coastal communities, sa lahat ng affected areas ng Yolanda. Rationale nila kung bakit nila tinayo para daw may buffer zone, kung may parating pa na iba pang bagyo, para ligtas sila. Sabi ni Panfilo Lacson, iniba na ang pangalan naging "no dwelling zone" na para daw ok lang magtayo ng mga establishments pero hindi na pwede tirahan. Yun ang nangyari. Ang naging epekto, maraming banta ng demolition lalo na dun sa isang community namin. May mga idedemolish na na mga community dahil daw nasa hazard area sila at ililipat sila sa northern barangays."

[The government responded with the declaration of “no build zone” areas that will particularly affect coastal communities, those areas affected by Yolanda (Haiyan). The rationale according to them is to create a buffer zone especially during typhoons. According to Panfilo Lacson, they changed the name to “no dwelling zone” so that establishments will still be allowed while dwellings are not. This is what is happening. The results are threats of demolition like that in our communities. Communities will be demolished because they are in the identified hazard areas, and they will be transferred to the northern barangays.]

(Owen Migraso, Center for Environmental Concerns)

Communities in the identified No Dwelling Zone areas are advised to evacuate but problems of housing and livelihood await them. The policy is similar to Sri Lanka’s Buffer Zone implemented after the tsunami, which also has the same rationale to clear beaches from dwellings but allows business establishments.

“Kaya nga pagkatapos ng Yolanda, kaagad pinatupad yung No Build Zone Policy ng gobyerno. Pero ang essence nyan, hindi para tulungan ang mga tao na makaahon o maisalba sa mga kalamidad na darating. Ang totoo nyan, pabor yan sa mga kapitalista. Ang Eastern Visayas ay napapalibutan ng mga baybaying dagat, lalong lalo na sa bandang Southern Leyte. Halimbawa, ang mga minahan nasa baybaying dagat rin—sa Tanauan, sa Tolosa—mahaba yan. Gagawin talaga yang minahan (refers to coastal areas) yung tinatawag na black sand. Sa mga baybaying dagat naman dito sa syudad, gagawin talaga yang eco-tourism. Ang plano nga dito sa San Jose, Magallanes hanggang dito sa may port area, gagawin yang Roxas Blvd para maging pasyalan. Kawawa yung mga nakatira dyan. Yung mga dyan nabubuhay, mga mangingisda”.

[After Yolanda (Haiyan), the government immediately implemented the No Build Zone Policy. But the real essence of the policy is not to help people recover or prevent future disasters. The truth is it will be beneficial to the capitalists. Eastern Visayas is surrounded by rich coastlines, especially Southern Leyte. These coastal areas are targets for mining—black sand mining. For example, the coastlines of Tanauan and Tolosa—are long coastlines.

The coastal areas in urban centers like Tacloban are targets for eco-tourism developments. There is a plan in San Jose, Magallanes up to the port area to construct a Roxas Blvd for leisure. People living in these areas will be mostly affected—those livelihoods depend on fishing.]

(Napoleon Escalona, Katrabaho)

People's organizations together with local NGOs are skeptical that the No Dwelling Zone Policy is being used as justification of the government to allow private corporations to exploit the rich coastal areas of the country. These coastal areas are resources on which local fisher folk and other small workers depend. Thus, relocating them away from the coastal areas is dispossessing them not just of their dwellings and livelihood but also their biographical attachment to their communities.

These, among others, are the broad indications of how disaster capitalism unfolds in the post-Haiyan Philippines. From the perspective of people's movements, there have been various warnings as early as one month after the typhoon, from statements of government officials to proposed plans. However, yet to be seen are the actual results as the private sector-led and investment-driven rehabilitation plan of the government proceeds. From here, it is worth carefully examining the precise character of disaster capitalism in the Philippine case.

A CRITICAL TAKE

While post-Haiyan Philippines have shown some indications of disaster capitalism, there are also peculiarities in the Philippine political economy that set the character of the Philippines apart from the aforementioned cases. The aim of this section is to elucidate the precise manifestations of disaster capitalism to better understand the ways in which dispossession and possible practices of oppression emerge, and therefore, be rendered visible by scholarly and practice-oriented research. This section is based on a critical reading of current literature on the Philippine political economy, as well as systematic reflection on the data provided by people's movements and studies on disaster capitalism that follow Klein's line of argument. In this section, three departures from the standard characterization of disaster capitalism are identified.

Continuity, Not Shock

First, the post - disaster contexts in the Philippines show continuity rather than “shock” from previous paradigms of thought and action. Greg Bankoff’s work on cultures of disaster is particularly instructive here. Considering the Philippines has been used to disasters such that it has become a frequent life experience, it is worth acknowledging that Haiyan, while its scale and magnitude are incomparable from recurring disasters in the Philippines, represents a continuation of precarious living conditions. This is particularly true for populations vulnerable to geophysical and economic hazards. As Bankoff puts it, the vulnerability of the Filipino people to disasters is a product of a long history of state neglect and oppression, instead of a monumentally different experience that changed the landscape of local politics and economy.

“Vulnerable populations are created by particular social systems in which the state apportions risk unevenly among its citizens and in which society places differing demands on the physical environment. Central to this perspective is the notion that history prefigures disasters, that populations are rendered powerless by particular social orders that, in turn, are often modified by that experience to make some people even more vulnerable in the future.”

(Bankoff 2001:25)

This was evident in the levels of devastation in different Haiyan-affected areas, of those mostly affected are also the poorest of the poor. “Poverty tends to aggravate the difficulties caused by natural disasters and accentuate the plight of the poorest and most disadvantaged,” Bankoff explained (Bankoff 1999:399). Thus, Klein’s “shock” is different in post-Haiyan Philippines as people are already poor and devastated prior the super typhoon.

Continuity can also be observed in the government’s response and approach to the recovery and rehabilitation phase. Proposed rehabilitation plans are criticized of being mere extensions of the government’s public private partnerships. As two respondents put it:

“Oo, kasi it’s a major public private partnership. Kumbaga, even without, di ba, nung panahon na wala pa yung Yolanda it’s already happening eh... kaya yun din kung kanyang kini-carry on kasi nga wala siyang malaking resources kaya nga hinihikayat niya yung private groups, mga corporations para tumulong sa ganitong efforts.”

[Yes, it’s a major public private partnership. Even without Yolanda (Haiyan), it’s already happening. The government does not have big resources so they are encouraging private groups, corporations to invest in these kinds of efforts.]

(Carlos Padolina, Citizens’ Disaster Response Center)

“Kahit walang Yolanda, sa tingin ko mangyayari pa rin siya kasi nga yung—nangyayari sa Samar yung pakikipagsabwatan—for example ng munisipyo sa mga—ang marami kasi doon yung mining e, mga mining companies kasi daw idle naman yung lupa kaya ipa-develop na lang daw sa kanila (mining corporations). For example, sa Guian, yung eco-tourism naman. Bago pa man Yolanda, yung nasa Eastern Samar, pinapaalis na talaga sila kasi nga idedevelop yung coastline for eco-tourism. Tapos after ng Yolanda, mas napaigting pa yung pagpapaalis dahil nga sa No Dwelling Zone.”

[Even without Yolanda (Haiyan), I think it will still happen. For example, the connivance in Samar—with regards to mining permits—because according to the municipal office the lands are idle thus, it will be more productive to let mining corporations develop the area. In Guian, eco-tourism projects are being proposed. Even before Yolanda (Haiyan), the people in the coastlines of Eastern Samar are already being evicted because it will be developed as eco-tourism areas. After Yolanda (Haiyan), evictions become blatant because of the No Dwelling Zone Policy.]

(Cyrene Camposano, League of Filipino Students-Tacloban)

For Cyrene Camposano of LFS-Tacloban, privatization schemes would have still taken off even without Haiyan. Thus, the continuity of neoliberal policies was not contingent on the massive opportunities Haiyan created. Although that too did matter, one can argue that the

government's post-Haiyan response perpetuates current policies instead of using the disaster as opportunity to take a sharp turn away from neoliberal practice.

Disaster Capitalism and Patronage Politics

Second, the patronage - driven political economy in the country, which in many ways complements neoliberalism and reflects the state's distinct approach to disaster profiteering. This culture of patronage in the Philippine political system can be rooted from the Spanish-introduced hacienda system (Anderson 1988:6). This land-based property rights was maintained by the American occupation, primarily to serve the growing export-import commodity economy that time and would later on consolidate wealth and power of the local ruling class (Anderson 1988:11). The country's political system was shaped by such conditions and the same local landed elites are also the same political forces dominating the country today. This is also evident in the province of Leyte, where only a few families such as the Romualdez, Loreto-Petilla and Cari clans hold a tight grasp of the province's political and economic resources (Lange 2010:61).

Integral to this political economy arrangement are relationships of patronage, manifest through local corruption. As Hutchcroft puts in, the Philippines is a patrimonial oligarchic state—similar to the Weberian typology—where:

“Political administration—whether in the pre-martial law period or under martial law or in the Aquino years—is often treated as a personal affair. The state apparatus is choked continually by an anarchy of particularistic demands from, and particularistic actions on behalf of, those oligarchs and cronies who are currently most favored by its top officials.”

(Hutchcroft 1991:415)

Hutchcroft's observation is relevant even in a post-disaster scenario. If Klein's description of disaster capitalism were to take root in the Philippines, big corporations and mega-businesses would have easily taken over local economies with as little intervention from the state as possible. However, disaster capitalism takes a distinct character in a

patrimonial oligarchic state where the political apparatus is held captive by particularistic interests even at the expense of market efficiency or profiteering.

The role of patronage politics in taking advantage from disasters in the country is actually not new. Bankoff already described how the 1991 Mount Pinatubo eruption became the avenue of some politicians to early campaigning in preparations for the 1992 National Elections (Bankoff 1999:405). This system of patronage in the Philippines does not only worsen or delay response to disasters, but also allows both political elites and oligarchs to benefit from the disasters and people's miseries. Political feuds stemming from this system is also another counterforce in the recovery phase such as the conflict between the Romualdezes in Tacloban City and the Aquinos in the national government causing unequal and delayed access to rehabilitation aid (Hodal 2014). Thus, disaster capitalism in the country does not only begin with private corporations but also with a strong system of patronage.

From Disaster Capitalism to Disaster Activism

Finally, the role of peoples' organizations in keeping vigilance in disaster capitalism is worth underscoring. The surge of people protesting two months after Haiyan's havoc and against the government's inefficient response is incomparable to any post-disaster case. On the 23rd of January 2014, a 12,000-strong vigil to demand the government justice and accountability signals the formation of People Surge—an alliance of super typhoon Haiyan survivors (Reyes 2014). The People Surge is an organization raising voices and legitimate concerns of survivors in Eastern Visayas regarding issues of rehabilitation, governance and even wider issues of climate justice and neoliberalization. The term "People Surge" as described in their Facebook account, posted January 21, 2014:

"The term 'People Surge' or 'Duluk han Katawhan' means an empowered people indicting the Noynoy Aquino government for its gross negligence that resulted in the massive loss of lives and properties. A metaphor to the storm surge that drowned people and communities during Yolanda's wrath, the term illustrates a swelling of the people constituting the typhoon victims and their supporters who will gather their strength, rise up and flood the streets to exact

justice from the inept government. People Surge also signifies Filipinos united to fight for their right to life and humane existence.”

Prior to People Surge, there are already other formations in the country directed towards disaster and vulnerability issues such as Balsa Mindanao—a people’s mobilization for disaster response and climate justice in Mindanao, Typhoon Sendong Survivors Collective, Barug Katawhan (Stand Up People), Indug Katawhan, Bangon Zamboanga, Bangon Bohol, among others (Salamat 2014). In November 2014, during the weeklong commemoration of super typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban City, these organizations have formed “a national alliance of survivors called *Daluyong*, a Filipino word which is understood in many regions as referring to a huge wave,” which demands justice and accountability from the government on issues of negligence, profit-oriented rehabilitation plans and to demand economic and political rights as well (Salamat 2014).

These same formations together with people’s organizations from ranks of small-scale peasants, workers, women, youth, indigenous peoples, and other non-government actors among others are also the movements that demand basic democratic rights such as decent wage, livelihood, housing, education, health, and access to social services, etc. that would respond to the vulnerabilities of populations prior and during disasters. Salamat described the sentiments of disaster survivors’ organizations,

“The disaster survivors trace the increasingly devastating storms to policies prescribed by international creditors and adopted by the Philippine government. These policies supported and liberalized mining, logging and expansion of plantations, which severely reduced the environment’s ability to absorb rainfall and mitigate waves and floods.”

(Salamat 2014)

People Surge, together with other disaster survivors, see their devastations and vulnerabilities as results of neoliberal policies of privatization, liberalization and deregulation being adopted and implemented by a patronage-driven government that further pushes people to dire poverty conditions.

“Aminin natin ang totoo, itong mga nagaganap na kalamidad, gawa rin naman ito ng tao e. Ang tingin ng Katrabaho, yung nangyaring Yolanda ay isang eksperimento para matupad ang plano ng mga imperyalistang bansa. Kahit hindi na-Yolanda, ganun din naman ang plano.”

[Let’s face the truth, these calamities are also man-made. Katrabaho sees Yolanda (Haiyan) as an experiment of these imperialist countries to further pursue their economic interests. Even if there is no Yolanda (Haiyan), plans of privatization will still pursue.]

(Napoleon Escalona, Katrabaho)

“Nakikita ng Katrabaho na may pagbangon pero sa panlabas lang yan nakikita e. Pero kung titignan natin sa kaibuturan, wala talagang nagbago dahil patuloy na naghahirap ang mga tao dito sa Eastern Visayas. Patuloy na nakakaranas ng sobrang kahirapan. Ito nga, pasukan na. May mga anak ako na nag-aaral. Halos lahat talaga ng mga magulang namomroblema dahil ngayong pasukan, mahal ang mga gamit, may iba pang babayaran sa eskuwelahan, ito pang ipinapatupad na K-12, pagtataas ng mga matrikula. Yung nakikita dito sa Eastern Visayas, panlabas lang yan e. Pero kung papasok ka sa kaibuturan, wala talaga.”

[Katrabaho observes recovery but seems it is only a show. If we will look closely, there is really no recovery at all because of persistent poverty here in Eastern Visayas. The people continue to experience extreme poverty. Like now, it’s the start of class and I have children who will need to enroll in school. Many parents are still struggling where to get money to buy school supplies and pay school fees. Additional to our burden is the implementation of K-12 alongside with the increasing tuition fees. What we see here in Eastern Visayas is not genuine recovery.]

(Napoleon Escalona, Katrabaho)

Thus, in long term, these organizations argue that the most effective way of disaster risk reduction is to change the system that permits vulnerabilities, inequalities and class divides.

“Dadako tayo sa pinakamataas na pananaw, hanggang nanatiling bulok ang sistema ng ating gobyerno at nanatiling mala-pyudal at mala-kolonyal ang sistema ng ating gobyerno. Magpapatuloy talaga ito kahit hindi na Yolanda, magpapatuloy yan. Dahil alam mo naman ang mga nasa poder, sila kasi ang hari e. Kung anong gusto nila mula sa pakikipagtulungan—ayun ng mga taga ibang bansa, sa pakikipagsabwatan. Wala silang pakundangan kung ano man mangyari sa mga tao, lalong lalo na sa mga maliliit. Wala silang pakialam. Kaya nga dapat malaman ng buong mamamayang Pilipino na itong mga nangyayari. Hangga’t hindi nagkakaisa ang mga Pilipino na magsarili ang ating bansa, magpapatuloy itong bulok na sistema ng ating gobyerno lalong lalo na sa pulitika. Kontrolado kasi nila ang pulitika e. Nandyang ang hukuman, nandyang ang Armed Forces, nandyang ang Senado at Kongreso—lahat sa kanila. Kaya ang dapat talaga, lumaban. Magkakaroon lang talaga ng katuturan—o makakabangon ang lahat ng mga mahihirap, magkakaroon talaga sila ng maginhawang buhay kung magkakaroon ng tunay na reporma sa lupa at pambansang industriyalisasyon. Dadako tayo sa pinakamataas na pananaw dahil yan naman talaga ang dapat mangyari. Kung nagkakaisa lang ang mga Pilipino, magagawa talaga yan. Pero hangga’t may pag-aagam-agam, pag-aalangan ang bawat Pilipino, malabo pa talagang mangyari yan.”

[As long as our system of governance is inefficient and our society remains a semi-feudal, semi-colonial one, these conditions will still persist with or without Yolanda (Haiyan). The elites who are in the positions do not really care for the people. They will continue to connive with foreign corporations to sell out our resources. The Filipino people should know about this. Until we haven’t been united as a people to fight for our sovereignty as a nation, this rotten system of the government will continue to reign. They control the executive, judiciary, and legislative—Senate and Congress and even the Armed Forces. Thus, the people will need to assert. Long-term recovery will only be achieved through genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization. If only the people will unite to assert such.]

(Napoleon Escalona, Katrabaho)

Katrabaho, an organization of small-scale workers and vendors in Eastern Visayas explains that the current system is defined by the connivance among politicians, local elites and foreign corporations

and their profit-making agendas that allow disaster capitalism to take root in the country. The role of movements to expose and oppose anti-people policies and demand what are rightfully to the people is one important nuance of the Philippine case, and an important component in understanding disaster capitalism as a global phenomenon. People's miseries turned into militancy is one important particularity of a disaster aftermath that Klein has overlooked. As observed in the Philippine experience, the role of people's movements in keeping vigilance against foreign domination, local corruption and other similar issues is actually decisive in insulating the country from the latter.

CONCLUSION

In today's neoliberal era, disasters are also considered as opportunities to create markets—a phenomenon dubbed as disaster capitalism. In this context, the state acts as facilitators of private sector involvement in disaster response, instead of providing the primary response. By implication, this further compromises conditions of disaster victims through dispossession and disempowerment.

Disaster capitalism as a concept has been useful in making sense of a country's political economy after disasters. There are many empirical manifestations of this all over the world—from the experience in the Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka and Hurricane Katrina in the United States. There are also indications of this in the Philippines, in particular, the post-Haiyan case that did not just expose the Filipino people's vulnerability to such disaster but also the neoliberal character and patronage culture of the government.

But disaster capitalism also has nuances depending on the context. In this piece, I have outlined several characteristics of the post-Haiyan context that are not apparent in other conceptualizations. First is continuity rather than shock in terms of vulnerabilities and pre-disaster conditions. Second is the patronage character of the country's political system that complements neoliberalism. And lastly, there is the role of people's movements in raising the discourse of disaster resiliency to the systemic inequalities in the country.

The Haiyan aftermath is not just a potential venue for the government and private corporations to generate profit as seen in the broad indications

of disaster capitalism in the country, but also reflects the state of Philippine society and exposes many other flaws in the system. The class divide in a disaster-stricken Philippines may widen as unequal wealth accumulation continues. But the worsening conditions of the people also allow them to organize themselves and collectively demand and fight back for what are rightfully theirs. The people's misery may be a source of profit for the capitalists and corrupt state, but it is also the source of militancy, resistance and empowerment towards social change.

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