



Stories from the frontlines: Decolonising social contracts for disasters in conflict areas

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3 A social contract lens has considerable value as a framework for understanding rights and
4 responsibilities within risk governance research. The social contract lens is crucial for questioning
5 state responsibility, and examining citizen demands in the aftermath of climate and natural hazard-
6 based disasters (O'Brien et al 2009, Pelling and Dill 2006, 2010, Pelling 2011, Siddiqi 2012,
7 Yenugopal and Yasir 2017, Blackburn 2018). Arguably, this lens is analytically useful even when
8 "vague about the precise definition of the social contract adopted." Much of this literature employing
9 social contract frameworks in disaster research tends to refer to an abstraction that determines the
10 general distribution of rights and responsibilities, and citizen expectations, of the state in the aftermath
11 of climate and natural hazard-based disasters (Blackburn and Pelling forthcoming). The role played
12 by the state and determined by such a state-citizen social contract, in the aftermath of disasters has
13 been usefully interrogated in recent years (Cohen and Walker 2008, Olson and Gawronski, 2010,
14 Taras 2015, Wood and Wright 2016). There are however few studies that engage with citizenship; and
15 how people's experience of citizenship is affected or transformed by disasters (Chhotray 2014, Remes
16 2016 & Siddiqi 2017).

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25 Political science research has often questioned state legitimacy and instability in the aftermath of a
26 disaster (Healy and Malhotra 2009, Gasper and Reeves 2011, Cole et al 2012 & Chang and Berdiev
27 2015). Natural hazard-based disasters negatively impact the state-citizen relationship. The very basis
28 of a social contract is challenged when the state is seen as unable to provide basic security to its
29 citizens. This perceived failure in, any variation of, a state-citizen contract, results in wavering of
30 citizen consent to be governed and a re-thinking of political relationships in disaster affected
31 communities. In fact, it has been suggested that "temporary breaks in the dominant political and social
32 systems post-disaster open space for alternative social and political organizations to emerge" (Pelling
33 and Dill 2010, 25). In regions of the world suffering from conflict and insurgency, it is further
34 believed that the wavering of citizen consent in the aftermath of a disaster enables rebel and insurgent
35 groups to use the state 'failure' (Le Billion and Waizenegger 2007) to their advantage (Walch 2014),
36 capturing political space and establishing their own citizenship-based contract with local populations.
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45 Broken social contracts are believed to manifest in a direct relationship developing between 'state
46 failure' and 'insurgent capture' of the post-disaster political space. However, Siddiqi's (2014) work
47 illustrates the problems associated with this 'linear' understanding of post-disaster politics and
48 encourages a more nuanced understanding of such complex political moments. In this paper we take
49 on that challenge and offer new insights that enhance our understanding of how natural hazard-based
50 disasters affect citizenship in areas facing protracted insecurity and conflict. The paper focuses on the
51 regions of Mindanao in Southern Philippines, where people have been living amidst communist and
52 separatist insurgencies while experiencing slow and sudden onset hazard-based disasters. It argues
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3 that, to an extent, disasters reveal the resilience rather than weaknesses prevalent within dominant
4 social contracts.
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7 In particular, it illustrates how anxieties and inequities prevalent within the terms of this contract, are
8 lived through the experience of citizenship by those subjected to its governing regime. Far from being
9 simply 'broken' and thereby enabling 'insurgent capture' of post disaster political space, we argue
10 that the unequal and exclusionary geographies of state intervention expose the malleable resilience of
11 the postcolonial social contract. The case study of Mindanao provides evidence of a post-disaster
12 moment revealing a differentiated and multi-tiered citizenship defined by the state-citizen contract in
13 the region. The unequal manifestations of citizenship were partly negotiated, and partly contingent
14 upon the terms under which the postcolonial social contract was forged in Mindanao. Post disaster
15 development interventions in areas suffering sustained insecurity have significant consequences for
16 how citizenship is experienced under different social contracts. Disaster studies can no longer ignore
17 this situation.
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25 This paper is divided into four parts. The first discusses the analytical and conceptual framing. The
26 second discusses the case of South Eastern Mindanao affected by the 2012 Typhoon Pablo. Mindanao
27 is populated by indigenous peoples facing a communist insurgency from the New People's Army
28 (NPA) fighting the state since the 1960s. The third presents a case study of an area beset by the
29 intricate problems of hazard and violence-induced vulnerability in a densely populated urban zone of
30 Zamboanga City. The region has been simultaneously ravaged by disastrous monsoon waves and
31 long-standing violent nationalist secessionist war led by Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) for
32 the last half a century. The concluding section offers some analysis on the findings.
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38 **The state-citizen relationship: disasters and insecurity in the post-colony**

39 *The nature of social contracts determines post-disaster state intervention*

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44 This paper takes as a starting point scholarship that challenges ideas of the social contract as a
45 singular form of consent emerging at a particular juncture of social history (Sisk 1995, Rubin 1996,
46 2012). It recognises that consent is not only dynamic and changing but also forged by citizens and the
47 state through a series of particular events and reconfigurations either tacitly or explicitly (Waldron
48 1989: 22). From this perspective, social contracts are not static forms of comfortable acquiescence but
49 have historical, often painful, antecedents. These include indigenous forms of consensual
50 arrangements between people and their leaders. These arrangements can often be violently
51 reconfigured by modern state formations or political forces that challenged them.
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3 Blackburn and Pelling (forthcoming) argue that while classical social contract thinking may have
4 been reserved for determining people's relationship with a sovereign, it is important to recognise that
5 this contract is indeed flexible, and should describe the "distribution of rights and responsibilities
6 between parties", tribal groups or religious communities. Equally, the authors also emphasise that
7 while social contract theory has historically been more concerned with the terms of this agreement, to
8 make this lens work for disaster studies there is a more urgent need to engage with the critical
9 political and social juncture at which it is negotiated and re-negotiated. The aftermath of disasters
10 provides an opportunity for state and citizens to renegotiate and reconfigure social contracts, creating
11 new spaces of citizenship experience and engagement. That said, we argue in this paper that social
12 contracts are negotiated settlements between citizens' demands and state responsibility that are on the
13 one hand, dynamic and changing. While on the other hand, they are also remarkably resilient in
14 reproducing and reinforcing the foundational inequities on which they were built.

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22 According to Acemoglu's (2003) view of social conflict theory, those who hold political power
23 knowingly pursue inefficient policy outcomes to maximize their own payoffs. Disasters do not create
24 such conflict. They are unequivocally problematic for ruling political regimes. Writing about political
25 failure in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Ignatieff (2005) states that, "when the levees broke, the
26 contract of American citizenship failed." When a state does not provide a minimum level of security
27 to its citizens affected by disaster, it fails to fulfil its most basic responsibility. This often pushes the
28 affected citizens to demand their rights or political change. Disasters have therefore been framed as
29 governance deficits that 'break' social contracts and catalyse 'windows of opportunity' or 'tipping
30 points' for social change (Pelling and Dill, 2006, 2010, Birkmann et al, 2010). By fracturing the state-
31 citizen contract, natural hazard related disasters cause both parties to fundamentally re-think their
32 relationship with each other. Evidently, a state's response after a disaster is profoundly determined by
33 the nature of the social contract with its citizens.

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41 de Waal's (1996) work revealed that when a state is truly fearful of social and public action, in the
42 case of large-scale disasters, it works towards new anti-disaster guarantees renegotiating the very
43 terms of the social contract. Alternatively, states have also used disasters to reassert their own power,
44 prevent political mobilisation and keep political challengers out (Cohen and Werker 2008).
45 Earthquakes in both China (1976) and Turkey (1999) resulted in authoritarian regimes advancing their
46 own visions of development while quashing burgeoning oppositional discourse (Pelling, 2011). State
47 response to natural hazard based disasters is often dependent on the degree of 'trust' people place in
48 ruling regimes and their 'belief' in institutional response determined by the nature and type of state-
49 citizen contracts (Chamlee-Wright and Storr, 2010; Akbar and Aldrich 2017).

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56 *The trust deficit between state and citizens*
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4 'Trust' and 'belief' in state institutions, are critically important features of a social contract. The
5 deficit in trust and belief is now recognised not only for determining rights and responsibilities after a
6 disaster but also as a key driver of anti-state action in 'backward' and 'rural' communities in the
7 postcolonial context. For decades literature has referred to people's motivation to fight against the
8 state in terms of either: 'greed' (of those seeking to access the material or resource wealth within a
9 wider polity) or 'grievance' (of groups left behind in state-led development) (Collier and Hoeffler
10 1998, 2002 & 2004, Fearson and Laitin 2001 & Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2008). However, recent
11 anthropological work has convincingly argued the case for looking beyond these motivations and
12 towards a sustained failing in social contracts and the conditions they deliver. There is research
13 suggesting that motivation to join insurgencies is driven by the *need* to express moral outrage at an
14 unjust state and to receive "emotional in-process benefits" (Wood 2001, 143). Shah (2013) points out
15 that the motivation is to *feel* "the significance of relations of intimacy" when dealing with a distant
16 and far off state. By way of analysis, Shah (2013) explains that unjust social contracts result in
17 unequal and exclusionary experiences of citizenship giving rise to insurgency movements.
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26 Where the state uses the anxieties and inequities prevalent in postcolonial social contracts to construct
27 a state-citizen relationship based on domination and exploitation of its 'rural' and 'marginal' citizens,
28 insurgents often make a very different, even more egalitarian, experience of citizenship possible
29 (Shah 2007, 2010 & 2013). Scott's (1976) seminal work in particular, emphasises that the
30 postcolonial state has not only been historically complicit in burdening 'peasants' through taxation
31 and revenue demands but also provided the "legal and coercive machinery" through which such a
32 state-citizen relationship can be forged. Thus, explaining not only why insurgencies find recruits in
33 these marginal and rural areas but also identifying some of the inherent crises and injustices within
34 state-citizen social contracts, manifesting as unequal experiences of citizenship, even before disaster
35 unfolds.
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43 In most analysis of 'state failure' and 'broken social contracts', governments are both unable and
44 unwilling to reach out to those suffering from disasters, in areas beset with insurgency. In fact "rebel
45 movements mimic governance strategies associated with the state" to forge their own social contracts
46 with citizens (Schouten 2016), and often even on far more equal terms (Shah 2013) than with the
47 state. These tensions and inequities in the postcolonial social contract that result in an unequal
48 experience of citizenship are often negatively affected by disasters. This is because the experience of
49 a disaster can embolden and legitimise the social and political "discourse of anger" against the state
50 (Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011, Pantti et al 2012). The experience of living through a natural
51 hazard based disaster, constructing and re-living narratives of the event, and the actions of people
52 trying to rebuild their lives can result in a particular rights' claim to citizenship. This social process
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3 should not be viewed as one that ‘breaks’ social contracts in ways that result in ‘state failure’ and
4 ‘insurgent capture’ but rather importantly recognise the extent to which it is being determined by the
5 underlying negotiation, or a re-negotiation, of the state-citizen contract.
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9 *Experiencing citizenship in the aftermath of disasters*

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11 Social contracts may turn a progressive corner after large-scale disasters (Siddiqi 2013) that generate
12 “disaster citizenship” and expand citizen rights (Siddiqi 2017). Such “disaster citizenship” is used to
13 make increased citizen demands from the state in the aftermath of natural hazard-based disasters.
14 Other times citizens may also, refuse to alter the terms of the state’s engagement with this contract.
15 Citizens remain unwilling to cede any further ‘citizen acquiescence or consent’ (Blackburn and
16 Pelling forthcoming) in exchange for greater protection from the state (Remes 2016). The impact of a
17 disaster on citizenship experience is determined by the state-citizen social contract and the extent to
18 which it is resilient or flexible to change. Our evidence indicates that even in conflict and insurgency
19 affected areas, citizenship does not simply collapse in the aftermath of disasters, due to ‘broken’
20 social contracts but takes contextually driven turns. The empirical work shows that social contracts
21 are far more malleable and resilient, unlikely to ‘break’ in ways that result in ‘state failure’ and
22 insurgent ‘capture’, even in the aftermath of climate and natural hazard-based disasters in insurgency
23 affected areas.
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32 Our case studies explore the lived complexities of citizenship in the aftermath of two separate and
33 distinct disasters that unfolded in the region of Mindanao, in Southern Philippines. These islands have
34 been a site of armed communist and separatist insurgencies since the 1960s, while also suffering from
35 natural hazard related disasters, including the 2012 Category 5 typhoon in the south-east and more
36 frequent but destructive seasonal tidal flows along the waterfront in Western Mindanao. Our research
37 in these areas do not show evidence of a ‘broken social contract’ that would allow insurgent and rebel
38 groups to ‘occupy’ governable spaces left vacant by the state in the aftermath of disasters. However,
39 our findings demonstrate the resiliency of the state-citizen social contract in Mindanao. We argue that
40 the social contract has reproduced unequal experience of citizenship that marginalises the (poorer)
41 indigenous and Muslim communities and is, at least partly, contingent upon the nature of the social
42 contract forged in postcolonial Philippines as demonstrated in the next section.
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50 Our evidence illustrates that state interventions to re-settle citizens in the aftermath of disasters
51 resulted in a profoundly unequal experience of citizenship, distrust in state sanctioned ideas (and
52 providers) of ‘security’ and a range of shifting material realities on the ground. The Filipino state
53 demonstrated that the social contract was not damaged or destroyed but differentiated across class,
54 indigenous groups and religions creating an unequal experience of citizenship. Significantly, these
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3 inequalities are rooted in the history of the formation of social contracts in Mindanao and not factored
4 by state disaster management approaches. Post disaster development interventions, particularly in
5 areas suffering from sustained insecurity, have significant consequences for postcolonial experiences
6 of citizenship under different social contracts that state disaster policy does not always recognise. This
7 work contributes “towards a postcolonial disaster studies” (Carrigan 2016). It also follows in the
8 footsteps of Bankoff (2004, 2007) and discusses the history, culture and politics of Mindanao.
9 Mindanao is a region where any social contract is forged by the strength of social relations inasmuch
10 as by agreement with a sovereign.
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17 **The Contingencies of Postcolonial Social Contract**

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20 The social contracts binding the Philippine state and its constituencies are far from *a priori* but, rather,
21 an outcome of complex events including the country’s colonial history, intricate politics of
22 postcolonial state formation as well as the agency of its subjective constituencies. Insurgency and
23 secessionist movements in Mindanao primarily operate in areas that are home to diverse indigenous
24 and Muslim ethnic societies organised around distinctive social contract philosophies. While diverse,
25 these social contracts were founded on kindred relations, connections to ancestral lands, cosmology,
26 and religious orientations.¹ Underpinning these relations and connections are traditions of solidarity,
27 leadership, laws, customs, and jurisprudence configured by the strength of society, characteristic of
28 past Southeast Asian galactic polities, as opposed to highly centralised state authority that reflects its
29 contemporary socio-political configurations (Tambiah, 1979; cf. Migdal, 1988; Fox and Sather 1996;
30 Gibson and Sillander, 2011).²
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38 The driving forces behind these broadly diffused indigenous and Muslim societies were persons of
39 prowess, embodied by the sultans and a coterie of community chiefs. They established authority not
40 through coercive power but in accordance to skill and adroitness at addressing legal, social, economic,
41 security, land, residential, and ecological concerns of their respective constituencies (Abinales 2000,
42 McKenna 1998 Majul 1973, Tan 1994, Warren 1983, Warren 2002). However, the authority of the
43 sultanates and the chiefs gradually declined due to internal strife and sustained assaults by the Spanish
44 conquerors between 1600 and 1900. Finally buckling under a brutal United States military campaign
45 in the Twentieth Century (Kramer 2006, Abinales 2005). Soon after consolidating its foothold in the
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51 ¹ An indigenous people’s alliance called the Lumad Mindanao asserts that at least 48 groups of peoples with
52 distinct culture, identity, history, traditions, and even language make up the indigenous constituencies in
53 Mindanao. The secessionist group, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), has in many occasions presented an
54 idea that their constituency comprises of 13 Islamised “tribes” collectively referred as the “Bangsamoro
55 people”.

56 ² Extensive ethnographic accounts on indigenous peoples in Mindanao are widely covered in past (Saleeby
57 1905) and recent works (Gaspar 2011, Gatmaytan 2005, Manuel 2000, McKenna 1999, Schlegel 1970).
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3 Philippines, American colonial agents introduced a series of sweeping land laws that opened up native
4 lands to corporate and individual ownership. These laws engendered the resettlement of tens of
5 thousands of landless populations from the central and northern regions of the Philippines that had
6 posed significant political challenges to the colonial government. While colonialism succeeded in
7 suppressing the old but dispersed sovereign powers of Mindanao, it did not necessarily undermine the
8 older forms of social contracts binding their constituencies. The sultans and chiefs continued to hold
9 on to their roles as men of prowess, adroit in finding solutions to pressing community concerns.

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14 The ascendancy of postcolonial authority, however, posed greater challenge to the old social order
15 and the contracts that underpinned them, as it sought to establish a universal social contract centred on
16 the nation state as part of decolonisation. In many ways, the end of colonialism in 1945 and the onset
17 of decolonisation³ effectively shifted the authority of the social contract from the persons of prowess
18 to state agencies with mandates to consolidate its emergent citizenry. Central to the pursuit of these
19 mandates was an overarching land policy of expropriating Mindanao resources to corporations that
20 invested in the fledging postcolonial national economy and the redistribution of its idyllic fields to
21 insurgents waging an agrarian-based rebellion in Northern Philippines. The new policies created a
22 national legal land structure that essentially shut off the indigenous and Muslim societies of Mindanao
23 from land redistribution process but privileged other citizens from elsewhere in the nascent nation
24 state. Consequently, these policies precipitated a massive influx of citizens from up north that
25 eventually outnumbered Mindanao's native population and set into motion their "minoritisation"
26 (Jubair 2000, Tan 1994, Rodil 1993).⁴

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35 The contingencies and politics of postcolonial state established an unequal national social contract
36 built on tiered citizenship. The landowning majority assumed the status of privileged citizens while
37 landless became "minority citizens" (with far less defined legal rights and entitlements) practically
38 reduced to "neither citizen nor alien" (cf. Chatterji 2012: 1051). Nonetheless, these unequal policies
39 succeeded in integrating indigenous and Muslim communities into the broader national constituency
40 incorporated into the state-centred social contract. Moreover, the policies underpinning this national
41 social contract were not necessarily set in stone but occasionally revisited and reformed to further
42 entrench the existing inequalities between 'landowning' and 'landless' citizens. This is evident in the
43 state's response in the aftermath of a disaster. However, the state does not necessarily initiate these
44 reforms unilaterally but in the course of active citizenship engagements by a minority population
45 demanding, negotiating, and advocating for better rights, entitlements, legal protection,
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54 ³ Decolonisation refers to the processes, events, and transformation of mind set marking the transition from
55 colonial to postcolonial rule (Berger 2004, Betts 2005).

56 ⁴ Indigenous and Muslim groups in the Philippines were officially regarded as national minorities under policies
57 adopted by the 1954 Commission of National Integration and the Presidential Assistance to National Minorities.
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3 accountability, and better governance under the terms of the postcolonial social contract as shown by
4 the cases below.
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7 **Case one: Experiencing a category 5 typhoon and differentiated citizenship**

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10 Between February and September 2017, the first author spent three months doing ethnographic
11 fieldwork in one ‘community’ (two *Puroks*, in different *Sitios*, in the same *Barangay*) in the
12 Compostela Valley Province of South-Eastern Mindanao. The field site is located in the New Bataan
13 municipality, referred by the press as ‘ground zero’ (National Post 7 Dec 2012, Inquirer 6 Dec 2015)
14 of Typhoon Pablo⁵, a category 5 super typhoon that made landfall on the East Coast of Mindanao on 3
15 December 2012 (NBC News, 9 Nov 2013). Since Mindanao lies outside of the Philippines typhoon
16 belt, it was considered ‘typhoon free’ within national discourse (Inquirer, 26 Jan 2014). The
17 inadequate resources and lack of disaster preparedness was evident in local (community and
18 government) narratives of confusion and panic that led to large-scale destruction and mass casualties.
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25 Geographical characteristics of New Bataan municipality include a high altitude, surrounding
26 mountain ranges and significant forest cover with a considerable indigenous population and numerous
27 commercial mining and logging operations. Political scientists argue that such “resource rich” area
28 with a “rough terrain” inhabited by marginalised indigenous communities makes it particularly
29 amenable to insurgent activity (Collier and Hoeffler 2004, Fearson & Laitin 2001, Hegre 2003)⁶.
30 Unsurprisingly, it is a known stronghold of the communist guerrillas, the New People’s Army (NPA).
31 Living amidst a conflict between the insurgents and the state was a consistent challenge highlighted
32 by all residents interviewed in the area.
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38 The data from one hundred interviews and three digital story telling workshops, depicts how local
39 residents have learnt to live with, even ‘naturalise’ (Stanko 2000), the NPA insurgency. The
40 insurgents live in the forested uplands (CIA 1987), and tend to pass through villages in search of food,
41 or other supplies. Residents often prefer not to name the NPA but use safe words, such as, ‘the other
42 side’, ‘men with no shoes⁷’, ‘people from the *bukid*⁸ and refer to their supporters as *masa*⁹. In this
43 way, the conflict was simultaneously hidden from plain sight but also an extremely pervasive part of
44 life (Hall, 2007) in this region of New Bataan. As a non-native researcher, the author followed in the
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51 ⁵ Internationally known as Typhoon Bhopa

52 ⁶ For a critique see Daly 2012

53 ⁷ The NPA insurgency is a peasant led movement with a large proportion of tribal and indigenous population
54 whose members cannot afford to buy shoes. Some reports indicate that the group can steal shoes from those
55 killed or captured during armed conflict.

56 ⁸ Tagalog word for ‘farm’. People from the *bukid* are generally peasants.

57 ⁹ Transliteration of the Maoist reference to ‘mass-based’ or people
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3 footsteps of those who have conducted research in insurgency affected areas while maintaining ethical
4 standards (Nordstorm and Robben 1996, Smythe & Robinson 2001, Wood 2001 & 2006).
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7 *State intervention and differentiated experience of citizenship in the aftermath of Typhoon Pablo*
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10 In this *barangay*, it was evident that a state-citizen contract was not destroyed due to Typhoon Pablo
11 but was acutely differentiated across groups, creating a multi-tiered experience of citizenship amongst
12 disaster affected populations. This experience was determined by “a set of themes expressed in a
13 series of contestations, negotiations and compromises” after the disaster (Remes 2015, 196). The
14 ownership of homes not only manifested inequalities prevalent in the social contract but also affected
15 the experience of citizenship. In Holston’s (2008, 113) words “for most citizens, the effect was
16 overwhelming: their status as *illegal residents* subverted their *civil citizenship*”.
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22 The Compostela Valley Province of Mindanao was affected by disasters and conflict. The fieldwork
23 in this area reveals that the Filipino state intervened in the aftermath of Typhoon Pablo, despite the
24 insurgency and trust deficit between state and people. This intervention was enabled by effective and
25 decentralised municipal government agencies: the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management
26 (MDRRM) and Municipal Social Welfare Department (MSWD). The two agencies have local
27 legitimacy because of their effective policy interventions in a tense region (Jackson, 2017). When
28 addressing citizens’ vulnerabilities to disasters, the state reached out to all affected residential
29 property holders in the region. This created a profoundly unequal and differentiated experience of
30 citizenship.
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37 After Typhoon Pablo, Residents of Purok B were evacuated to a nearby plateau. Subsequently, a
38 Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) assessment classified Purok B as uninhabitable, prone to
39 serious landslides and flooding. Therefore, the municipal government issued formal warnings to
40 residents relocated to ‘the plateau’ not to return to their homes in Purok B. This forcible resettlement
41 on the plateau began as an unpopular move within the community but was made more palatable in
42 2013, when the government allocated plots of land to all legally registered households of the original
43 Purok to build permanent houses. They were also provided building materials and PHP25,000¹⁰ to pay
44 for labour and building costs. This resulted in a shiny new housing community of colourful yellow
45 and green houses springing up on the plateau.
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52 In the years since the typhoon, local agencies propagated a discourse that miscreants returning to live
53 in the original purok would not be the responsibility of the state, particularly during a disaster. As
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56 ¹⁰ Approximately £330
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3 such, all residents of the plateau believe that returning to their old homes in Purok B means that they
4 would be forfeiting certain rights of citizenship, particularly around state rescue and relief during a
5 disaster.
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9 When I asked a middle aged woman about instructions she received from the government, she said:

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11 Yes, they told us that we cannot live in our old home. That place has been marked as
12 “X”. They don't allow us to live here... I remember that they warned us... that if there
13 will be another disaster they will not rescue us. We will not be their responsibility.
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18 Another young labourer in his early thirties echoed that the government had declared no
19 responsibilities towards citizens choosing to live in Purok B:
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22 ... it is critical over there. The government will not allow us to stay there... People
23 from DSWD¹¹ and from other agencies, warned us that whatever happens in the
24 original Purok, even if there are still people living there it is not their responsibility.
25 (After a disaster) if they need to be rescued or need relief they have to be here in
26 plateau.
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31 Several conversations revealed that residents relocated to the plateau, lived in fear of forfeiting their
32 right to state rescue and relief, in the event of another natural disaster, if they returned to Purok B.
33 This also manifested the grossly unequal experience of citizenship. Those citizens not relocated to the
34 plateau remained in the hazard prone area, Purok B, where they remain vulnerable to hazard-based
35 disasters with very limited legal and political entitlements to relief (Sen 1981).
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40 Fieldwork in the summer of 2017 revealed that half of the houses in Purok B were still occupied after
41 Typhoon Pablo as some people carried on living there. A number of residents from the plateau
42 regularly visit Purok B for farming and livelihood necessities (as the municipality will not allow
43 people to keep livestock or grow crops on the plateau). Though Purok B was declared ‘uninhabitable’
44 and extremely hazardous, it is now also home to new residents.
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49 An informant, Joy, was an effervescent twenty-two-year-old mother expecting her second child. Joy
50 lived with her young family in a house abandoned by her parents in Purok B. Joy was not entitled to a
51 state funded house on the plateau because she was not legally an adult and started a family a few
52 years after Typhoon Pablo. She looked longingly towards the plateau and said her husband was saving
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57 ¹¹ Department of Social Welfare and Development
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3 money to buy a house there. Joy's neighbour, was a middle aged indigenous Mandaya¹² woman of
4 meagre means from a remote upland *barangay*. She had moved into the typhoon battered house
5 abandoned by wealthier relatives who relocated to a bright coloured new house on the plateau.
6 Another informant living in Purok B was a woman in her late sixties who moved into a house
7 abandoned by her son's family because she had bad knees making it difficult to climb to their house
8 on the plateau. There were several residents in similar circumstances.
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13 Evidence from the fieldwork shows that informants still living in original Purok B (an area considered
14 dangerous, hazard prone and not 'state responsibility') were physically, financially or socially
15 vulnerable residents who had either been unsuccessful at demonstrating legal entitlement to a house
16 on the plateau or who moved into an abandoned house because they had nowhere else to live. In fact,
17 Purok B's marginal status combined with resident's obvious vulnerabilities created skewed social
18 power relations.
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23 One of the first houses upon entering Purok B, was inhabited by a male labourer in his early twenties.
24 This house was abandoned by his parents, but he made it his home whenever he returned from the city
25 so he could drink alcohol and smoke during the day with friends. Engaging in such anti-social
26 behaviour was clearly forbidden in the new housing community governed by a local committee and a
27 strict set of rules for community responsibility and behaviour on the plateau. However, the original
28 Purok B where economically and physically vulnerable residents primarily reside does not have
29 residential rules and perhaps, more evidently, no one powerful enough to enforce them.
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35 As part of post-disaster intervention after Typhoon Pablo, the state had a universal mandate to address
36 the vulnerability of citizens and provide them with a permanent and safe home not prone to natural
37 hazards. As one local Councillor of the *barangay* explained:
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41 The MGB identified our area (in Purok B) as unsafe because we are surrounded by
42 the river. The local government unit (LGU) decided to find an area that is safe for us
43 and the MGB assessment identified the plateau. The LGU therefore bought the 1
44 hectare plot of land and the MSWD (Municipal Social Welfare and Development)
45 through PSD (Provincial Social Welfare and Development) funded the building of
46 new houses. So that's what happened, they convinced our brothers in 'Purok B'¹³ to
47 transfer to plateau... for their own safety.
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54 ¹² Mindanao has about 18 different recognised indigenous and tribal groups collectively called *Lumad* (native).
55 The Mandaya are one of these groups and were the majority in the field site where research was done in
56 Compostela Valley.

57 ¹³ The name of the village has been replaced with a pseudonym
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4 An official from the MDRRM Office also stated that the evacuation and resettlement of residents
5 from this purok was driven by government concerns for safety and security of its citizens:
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9 Their area was flattened when it suffered flash floods during Pablo. That is why they
10 (government agencies) declared the area a “no build zone” and all residents were
11 relocated by the government.
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15 This demonstrates that the post-disaster resettlement policy had a clear goal of relocating all residents
16 from the area vulnerable to flooding and landslides. However, the state relocation programme
17 benefited those who could demonstrate residential rights and were willing to make the harder journey
18 to the plateau. Thus, the intervention created a category of preferred citizen deeply reminiscent of the
19 postcolonial social contract. Therefore the new and unofficial ‘minority citizens’ became those
20 without residential ownership and those with limited or no access to land rights. On one hand, the
21 post-disaster policy resulted in a progressive and positive experience of citizenship for residents
22 allocated safer, newer and better homes. On the other hand, the policy pushed the most vulnerable
23 towards abandoned houses in a dangerous and hazard prone area. This not only increased their
24 exposure to risk but also denied them the same rescue and relief citizenship rights associated with
25 residential legality.
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34 The inequalities that underlie the social contract between the state and its citizens in Mindanao
35 facilitated the creation of different categories of citizenship in the aftermath of the disaster. Citizens
36 with ownership rights were privileged, ‘visible’ and had a more formal relationship with the state. As
37 such, they received further safety and security after Typhoon Pablo. Nevertheless, for citizens without
38 recognisable residential properties and a tenuous relationship with the state, their experience of
39 citizenship was exactly the opposite. Their more tenuous relationship with the state, characterised by
40 residential precarity, resulted in condemning them to the margins of illegality. A state-citizen contract
41 was therefore evident and tangible in the aftermath of the disaster. This relationship was differentiated
42 by residential rights, with the state reaching out to people through the ‘legality’ of ownership,
43 resulting in multi-tiered ‘disaster citizenship’. Citizens already facing different forms of economic,
44 physical and social vulnerabilities were not only marginalised but also further exposed to the vagaries
45 of violent conflict between state and the NPA as demonstrated below.
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54 *State provided security and differentiated citizenship in the aftermath of Typhoon Pablo*
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3 Much has been written about indigenous and local communities living with, and participating in,
4 armed insurgency against the postcolonial state (Wood 2001, Mkandawire 2002, Joshi and Mason
5 2007). This literature has also been criticised for giving no agency to people themselves (Shah 2013,
6 Krovel 2011), representing them only as hapless victims stuck between different sides of the conflict
7 (Stoll 1993). Yet evidence from this barangay reveals that residents entitled to state intervention made
8 the active decision accept relocation to the plateau that is difficult climb and far from their farms.
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12 This decision is partly explained by the fact that beyond greater vulnerability to natural hazards,
13 residents of the original Purok B were also exposed to insurgency and conflict. While residents of the
14 plateau had legal ownership of their homes and received state services, those in Purok B lived in an
15 area considered uninhabitable or 'no build zone' by the state. Thus, living on the very margins of
16 legality and illegality. Consequently, as the paper will now illustrate, Typhoon Pablo exposed citizens
17 in Purok B to insecurity and conflict. The post-typhoon Pablo experience of citizenship was
18 differentiated by vulnerability to natural hazard as well as encounters with armed conflict between
19 military and NPA insurgents.
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25 Speaking about insurgency in the region, the former chairman of this *purok* now residing on the
26 plateau, said:
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29 ... the conflict of the soldiers and the NPA, left us affected. When many of the NPA
30 were killed by the military, we were accused of supporting them. When we were
31 living in 'original Purok B', this was one of our problems... We told the government
32 that we would be forced to obey them at times because we are just civilians. We
33 didn't choose sides.
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38 He makes it clear that while living in Purok B, citizens were caught between two sides of the conflict.
39 The topography of the plateau – a considerably hard to climb small elevation covered with ninety new
40 houses very close together - makes it difficult for the military to conduct regular surveillance against
41 NPA insurgents. However, Purok B is nearer to a particularly mountainous *barangay* well known for
42 being an NPA stronghold and is referred to as a "rebel corridor".¹⁴ There is also a permanent military
43 encampment operating a checkpoint since 2015. According to rules of engagement, military camps
44 have to be at a considerable distance from residential homes.¹⁵ However, since Typhoon Pablo
45 residents living in Purok B are not legally entitled to be there and are living in between illegality and
46 informality. As such, it was possible for the military camp to be stationed there. While residents in
47 Purok B were not afraid of the NPA insurgents but were worried about the possibility of being caught
48 between an "encounter" between the military and the NPA.
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56 ¹⁴ Taken from official statement released on social media

57 ¹⁵ Interview with civil society activist.
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4 As one middle-aged woman said:
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7 To tell you the truth, if there's no military it is much better. We will not feel scared
8 because (for us) there is no enemy.
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12 And another young man in his early thirties explained:
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14 It's dangerous here because in time of war you are here and it is not safe. You cannot
15 say you are safe if their presence (military) is here. You are not the one that they are
16 guarding, it is the hydro company.¹⁶ So, if there's an encounter then you will get
17 stuck in between and maybe even get killed because they will never know and think
18 maybe you are one of them (insurgents). So that is why it is not safe.
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23 In fact, some residents of plateau were obviously grateful for their more preferential citizenship status.
24 A former Chairman of the purok added that:
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28 As long as the military camp is away from us it is fine, their guidelines even say that
29 they should be a certain distance away from people's homes. But as you have seen
30 that is not happening in 'original Purok B', that is why it is dangerous there.
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34 While Ignatieff (2005) and Walch (2014) argue that the social contract 'breaks' in the aftermath of
35 disasters in conflict situations, this *barangay* in Mindanao tells the story of a very tangible and
36 evident relationship between the state and its citizens. The state intervened with a clear policy in the
37 aftermath of Typhoon Pablo in conflict-affected parts of New Bataan. The inequalities evident in the
38 social contract resulted in a differentiated and multi-tiered 'disaster citizenship' experiences. A social
39 contract built on the inclusion of certain groups and the exclusion of the 'minority citizens', was once
40 again a guiding framework in deepening anxieties and tensions within postcolonial citizenship in
41 Mindanao.
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47 **Case Two: Disaster Citizenship and Inequality in Post-conflict Zamboanga** 48 49

50 The inequities within the postcolonial social contract, manifesting through the experience of disaster
51 citizenship in Compostela Valley, are reflected in the succession of hazard and conflict-induced
52 disaster events in Zamboanga City, west of Mindanao. During the monsoon season in 2012, vigorous
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55 ¹⁶ Several informants expressed that the military camp was stationed there to provide security to a hydro-power
56 project under construction rather than 'them'.
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3 tides and large waves battered the densely populated coast of Zamboanga. The monsoon waves
4 destroyed houses on stilts, home to marginalized Muslim Tausug, Yakan, and Sama-speaking
5 communities and indigenous groups of Sama Dilaut. In 2013, a month long firefight between
6 government forces and a faction of the separatist MNLF destroyed the houses and neighbouring
7 structures owned by entrepreneurs, middle income residents, and other urban poor (BBC News,
8 2013). The violence displaced at least 118,000 persons and flattened about 10,000 structures from a
9 sprawling maze of streets and blocks of hovels, middleclass housing, and trading depots (NDRRMC,
10 2013).
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16 Coincidentally, the conflict zone once served as a sanctuary for families fleeing from secessionist
17 violence that, as described earlier, was an outgrowth of the political tensions resulting from unequal
18 land, property, and power relations emerging from the complexity of the Philippines' decolonisation
19 experience. From 1970s, the continuing influx of war-weary settlers transformed the green wetland
20 into a heavily-populated residential and commercial enclave with property owners and supposedly
21 illegal residents. Eventually, the zone became a critical component of Zamboanga's political
22 landscape, source of cheap labour and urban poor voters for politicians sustaining the ambiguous
23 property status as a "political technique" that the "elites master for constituting legitimate power" (cf.
24 Holston 2011: 313). "Far from holding apart the legal and the illegal, just and unjust, public and
25 private," the ambiguity of the land status of coastal Zamboanga was carefully managed, a feat made
26 possible by deeply-entrenched inequality underpinning the state-citizen contract in the Philippines
27 (Holston, 313).
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35 The continuum of hazard and conflict induced disasters in Zambaonga presents another lens for
36 viewing the resilience and tensions generated by the unequal terms of postcolonial social contracts in
37 the aftermath of extreme disaster events. The second author engaged in long-term ethnographic study
38 in Zamboanga. This included a year-long fieldwork from October 2009 to October 2010, visits during
39 armed conflict in September 2013 and a series of short travels during the reconstruction work from
40 October 2013 to 2016. The following narrative reflects conversations with about thirty informants
41 while 'hanging-out' (Geertz 1998) with the displaced in evacuation camps, temporary and more
42 permanent housing relocation as well as when they engaged with state officials and aid groups.
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49 *Property Rights as Basis for Hazard Protection Priorities*

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51 The state swiftly responded to the 2012 and 2013 events. This indicated a social contract was evident
52 rather than weak, or fractured, during extreme disaster in Zamboanga. The state promptly extended
53 food aid and other basic necessities to residents on the very first day of displacement. While swift, the
54 quality of intervention underlying these responses is not necessarily even handed but was significantly
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3 determined by the property status of the disaster affected citizens. Following the damaging 2012
4 monsoon waves, the government distributed food packs and medical assistance to landless residents
5 whose homes were swept away. The aftermath of the far more destructive events of 2013 marked a
6 critical difference in the form and quality of state response to propertied and non-propertied citizens.
7 Landowning entrepreneurs received lucrative packages of state assistance, such as business loans,
8 exemption from paying standard wages to their workers, and unfettered access to return to their
9 respective properties. By contrast non-landowners crushed by the fighting received the usual food aid,
10 small cash, temporary or permanent housing in areas chosen by the state. Furthermore, after
11 relocation, non-propertied citizens were barred from returning to the sites of their devastated homes.
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17 Similar to the Compostela Valley experience, government agents in Zamboanga invoked pre-disaster
18 property relations anchored on land titles for managing citizen's access to their old homes. This
19 "strategy of governing" in the aftermath of a disaster hinged not on the citizen's degree of exposure to
20 security issues, risk and hazards but, rather, to private property rights (cf. Sterett 2016: 579). This
21 strategy is driven by the proprietorial concept of formal landownership established by Spanish and
22 American colonial rulers and reproduced by postcolonial administrators as the core component of the
23 social contract. The legal philosophy of property ownership serves as the primary indicator for
24 determining who gets priority for protection rather than citizen's vulnerability to disaster risk and
25 hazards.
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32 The ideology of property rights underpins government blueprint for intervention and is evident in the
33 Zamboanga Roadmap to Recovery and Reconstruction.¹⁷ The recovery plan, an essential aspect of the
34 government commitment to the social contract distinguished not only the conflict-affected private
35 landowners from the landless but also sub-divided the landless into four classes of citizens:
36 homeowners whose dwelling structures were devastated, renters, and the sharers who lived with
37 homeowners without necessarily paying rent. The fourth category refers to the so-called "fake
38 evacuees," displaced people (who do not qualify in any of the first three categories) seen as
39 constituencies aiming nothing but gaming the system to win over welfare benefits from the state
40 (MindaNews, 2014). Moreover, the Zamboanga plan declared the waterfront - an ancestral home of
41 indigenous Sama people - a "no build zone."¹⁸ The declaration mandated relocating people through a
42 "pre-emptive resettlement" approach to managing risk and hazards in post-disaster reconstruction
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50 ¹⁷ The Zamboanga recovery blueprint allocated about 5,000 housing units for some 7,000 families required to
51 pass stringent assessment for citizens entitled to receive post-conflict government housing and benefits. The
52 targeted beneficiaries were less than the over 9,000 families identified as pre-conflict residents by an
53 interagency post-disaster needs assessment earlier.

54 ¹⁸ The Zamboanga plan requires the planting of mangroves in former areas of the waterfront community on the
55 premise that such move conforms to national environmental policies such as the Clean Water Act. The
56 regulations established a "no build zone" within twenty metres from the waterline of any body of water to
57 reduce the risk of a hazard-induced disaster.
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3 work (Correa 2011, Claudionos 2014, Ferris 2015: 114, Carrasco et.al. 2016a, Carrasco et.al. 2016b,
4 Vlaminc et.al. 2016, Tadjell 2017).
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7 *Capacity and Limits of Disaster Citizenship in Zamboanga*
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10 The Zamboanga case study further shows that the making of a postcolonial social contract in a post-
11 disaster setting is not exclusively determined by the state. Landless citizens did not simply accept the
12 government recovery plan but contested, negotiated, and cleverly tapped on legal resources
13 introduced during the decolonisation process. These acts not only reflect the idea of “disaster
14 citizenship,” but also reveal the capacity and limitation of the displaced citizens when progressively
15 influencing the substantive features of a social contract. In addition, this shows the openness of the
16 state that allows citizens to expand their rights, demand entitlements, and force the state to deliver
17 their end of the commitment to the social contract (Siddiqi 2013, 2017). Immediately after the
18 government announced plans to redevelop the devastated zones and relocate non-propertied residents,
19 some of the displaced closed ranks and mounted a sustained “no to relocation” campaign, an initiative
20 that can be describe as a form of “political action” following the tradition of “militant citizenship”
21 from a disaster-stricken population (cf. Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011: 107, cf. Southard 2011).
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29 The general message of the Zamboanga protest suggests that pre-emptive resettlement is a
30 maladaptive risk reduction strategy that compromises their cultural affinity, historic attachment to
31 their communities, and access to income sources while infringing their “freedoms of settlement and
32 livelihood” (Tadjell 2017: 452, *also see* Adger et.al. 2003; Dhakal and Mahmud 2014; Ncube-Phiri,
33 et.al. 2014; Johnson 2012). Some of the displaced scoured old government property records and in
34 the process recovered obscure presidential orders delineating their settlement as Muslim cultural
35 village in the 1950s, the first decade of Philippine decolonisation experience. The discovery of a
36 document (part of uneven postcolonial state reforms addressing the plight of its minority citizens)
37 provided the displaced with a crucial legal documentation supporting their claims for rebuilding their
38 homes in the devastated zone by virtue of cultural affinity and historical attachments. In other words,
39 landless disaster-affected citizens utilised a legal instrument for decolonisation to demand changes in
40 the recovery plan and partially reset the terms of the postcolonial social contract through active
41 citizenship in the aftermath of a disaster.
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50 Eventually, state officials backed down from their initial plan of removing all residents from
51 devastated zones. Instead, the state ushered international humanitarian agencies to participate in the
52 crafting of a recovery plan similar to the “build back better” approach to post 2006 Indian Ocean
53 tsunami disaster recovery (c.f. Lyons, Shiderman, and Saunders 2010). A third of the landless
54 displaced population were allowed to return and live in new housing built up in some parts of the
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3 devastated zone. However, more than half the number of the displaced families, were relocated
4 elsewhere in the city with those considered “fake evacuees” denied any housing assistance.
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8 The Zamboanga case shows that social contracts do not easily ‘break’ in ways that result in ‘state
9 failure’ or ‘insurgent capture’ in the aftermath of a disaster event. Rather they are, in some instances
10 invoked, rather passionately, by state officials and the citizens as they collide and also confer to
11 institute change in the adaptive instruments for post-disaster recovery.
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14 These acts illustrate the contingent character of the postcolonial social contract that while unequal is
15 also a flexible setting by which the state and citizens critically engage each other. As Siddiqi noted,
16 the aftermath of disasters is a complex political moment, which cannot be viewed simply from the
17 binary frames of ‘state’ or ‘insurgent’ capture but a site by which “disaster citizenship” can be further
18 examined (Siddiqi 2014, 2017).
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24 *Driving Disaster Citizenship through Contestations, Negotiations, and Tensions*

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27 Ethnographic evidence from Southern Pakistan also illustrates how the state-citizen contract was
28 strengthened in instead of ‘broken’ in the aftermath of 2011 and 2012 disastrous flooding events. Siddiqi
29 reported that the state and citizens managed to reach more progressive terms of moral solidarities,
30 showing how an aftermath of disaster generated ‘transformative’ change and held the social contract
31 together though in complex terms (Siddiqi 2017: 3).
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36 The citizenship experience in Zamboanga shows that these progressive transformations were also
37 driven by contestations, negotiations, and tensions in a postcolonial state that values property
38 protection far more than security of disaster-stricken citizens without properties. Once the state had
39 instrumentalised the disaster experience to enforce postcolonial land laws favouring the propertied
40 class, the landless disaster-affected citizens took political action, negotiated and forced the state to
41 revise the finer details of a post-conflict reconstruction plan. However, while the displaced of
42 Zamboanga succeeded in forcing some changes in the government recovery blueprint, the final plan
43 allowed only a few of the landless residents to return to the devastated zones. Those limitations spell
44 out the deep-seated inequities shaping the mechanisms for reconstruction, risk reduction, and broader
45 adaptation strategies in recovering from a disaster event (Mitra et al 2017, Obrien et al 2009, Pelling
46 and Dill 2010).
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54 The depth by which the ideology of private landownership is embedded in the government response
55 to the succession of hazard and conflict-induced disasters in Zamboanga reflects the inequities in the
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3 social contract in Philippines. Hazard, risk reduction, and recovery policies are mobilised not
4 necessarily as instruments of protection but tools for extending or withholding certain entitlements to
5 particular classes of citizens. Disaster events show that vulnerability is as much configured by the
6 complex dynamics of human agency, the ecosystem, and extreme physical hazards and postcolonial
7 social contract underpinned by unequal political, economic, and property relations rooted in the
8 legacy of colonialism and decolonisation (c.f. Bankoff 2003: 106).
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13 **Conclusion: Postcolonial social contracts and the disaster-conflict space**

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16 The two cases presented in this paper demonstrate that social contracts did not 'break' in ways that
17 resulted in 'state failure' and 'insurgent capture' but were malleable and resilient in the aftermath of
18 disasters in insurgency affected areas. Examining two different regions (East versus West Mindanao),
19 cultures (indigenous versus Muslim) and insurgencies (communist versus separatist) further
20 emphasises the robustness of these research findings. The state interventions, and citizenship
21 experience of residents, in post-disaster Compostela Valley and Zamboanga were not random
22 occurrences but a systematic response defined partially by the terms of the state-citizen contract.
23 Despite active insurgencies in these areas, there was limited evidence of citizenship collapsing in the
24 aftermath of the disaster. Equally, insurgents could not use that collapse to forge their own social
25 contracts. Crucially, this work demonstrates that citizenship rights and their experiences were
26 differentiated across landowning and landless citizens, reproducing the very inequities and anxieties
27 prevalent within the postcolonial social contract of Mindanao. While the disaster enabled new
28 modalities of state-citizen engagement and interaction, the inequalities within the social contract
29 eventually prevailed.
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38 It is evident that post disaster development interventions, in areas suffering from sustained insecurity
39 and conflict, risk reproducing and intensifying the injustices prevalent in social contracts, if they fail
40 to recognize the resilience and manifestation of this state-citizen contract in the postcolonial world.
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