



# **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND FACEBOOK USE OF TACLOBAN CITY AFTER SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This case study examined the extent to which social media can help build and strengthen the social capital of communities in the face of natural disasters. It investigated Tacloban City, an area hit hardest by Super Typhoon Haiyan on 08 November 2013. Haiyan is considered as the most powerful tropical cyclone in recorded human history. With the vast international attention it received, it also highlighted the growing role of Facebook in facilitating and influencing disaster aid and response, particularly in a developing country such as the Philippines.

Social capital describes how networks and resources within the community are made available to people through their connections with others. This concept is gaining popularity because of the increasing role of social media during disasters. While its effects on the behaviour of people in disasters are generally perceived to be useful, few studies have actually examined how social media changes the way people mobilise themselves in a disaster-stricken and politically tensed society.

Separate interviews and focus group discussions among selected residents of two coastal communities (Barangays 89 and 48-B), selected members of two local NGOs (Community & Family Services International and Operation Blessing - Visayas), and three members of the city government (vice-mayor, urban and environmental consultant, and city councillor) revealed that Facebook extended the geography of the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan. It allowed the survivors to inform their families and relatives, who are residing in different countries, of their condition and consequently receive physical help, like money and goods, from them.

However, as a mediated form of communication, Facebook was limited in addressing the socio-political realities of Tacloban City, which was marked by widespread mistrust and uncertainty. Paradoxically, Facebook has amplified the structural inequalities already present in Tacloban City before it was hit by Super Typhoon Haiyan. While it enhanced strong ties, it has failed to forge weaker ties. As a result, it has instead widened the gap between those who have more power over the access to resources and those who have less.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“Truly, the Filipino rises to his finest self during trying times, the more trying the times, the finer the rising. Or it is in times of disaster that the Filipino ceases to be a disaster, thinking of others first before self.”*

*– Conrado de Quiros, Filipino columnist*

### 1.1 Super Typhoon Haiyan Hits Tacloban City

On the morning of 08 November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan, considered as the most powerful tropical cyclone in recorded human history to date (Sedghi, 2013), made its landfall in the Philippines. Its sustained winds of up to 315 kilometres per hour (Mullen, 2013) were mostly felt in the central islands of the archipelago, particularly Tacloban City. The gusts of wind were so strong that it created a wall of water as high as seven metres, much like a tsunami or a tornado carrying water (Flores, 2013).

This storm surge, as identified by weather experts, was a phenomenon that this coastal city had never experienced before. As the waters speedily rose, bringing with them forceful waves, the shocked residents could only hope that whatever they were clinging onto or standing at would be strong enough to keep them alive. They were only warned of heavy rains and extremely strong winds enough to damage their houses. Yet as the storm waters waned, it was very clear that this super typhoon was more than that.

With electricity and communication lines completely cut off, the city was isolated from the rest of the nation and the world. From midday until late afternoon of the day itself, there was limited news coverage about the city. No one knew, even the residents themselves were unaware, of the extent of the damage. The gravity of the disaster was only recognised when residents started to walk outside and look for their families and loved ones.

The dead lay on the streets along with animal carcasses. Houses and buildings suffered major damage; many were totally waterlogged. Cargo and passenger ships were carried by the storm surge across land and residences (mostly informal settlements), ending up in the middle of the roads. Fallen trees and other debris blocked the streets. It did not take long after a rotting stench filled the air.

Numerous people, even those who were seriously injured, were just walking to and fro “like zombies going nowhere.”<sup>1</sup> At some point, there were bouts of panic and frenzy as some residents would report news of disaster relief teams approaching. Ironically, news spread easily that time.

“*Radyo Bagtas*” or “Radio on Foot,” as the locals would jokingly call it, was the primary source of information during the first few weeks after the super typhoon hit. Residents reported receiving ‘news’ through people they met on the streets. Frustratingly, most of these stories were often false. Even the city mayor was reported dead at some point. No one can blame whoever started such a malicious statement: “there was no government at that time.”<sup>2</sup> It was every person for themselves.

This collective feeling of abandonment was clearly manifested in several incidences of looting. The overall tension reached its peak when some store owners had to use their guns and fire warning shots to scare hungry and exhausted residents away. There was an overall feeling of agitation in the air. Clearly, the people were desperate for help.

Meanwhile at the grounds of the city government hall, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) had set-up a satellite wireless internet station where residents could access their Facebook accounts for a maximum of three minutes. This service was immediately available the night after the super typhoon hit. Thousands of typhoon survivors lined up just to be able to post an update on their social media feed, saying that: first, they are alive and second, they needed help.

Those who were able to save their smartphones (mobile phones with Internet accessibility) went to the battery charging stations, also in the city government hall, and accessed their Facebook accounts through their devices. It is notable that Facebook was the only webpage that was allowed access in the system. It was also the top application users thought of using once they had their mobile phones fully charged.

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<sup>1</sup> Actual comment made by NGO worker #8 during a focus group discussion in Tacloban, 07 July 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Actual comment made by community resident #12 during a focus group discussion in Tacloban, 10 July 2014.

Interestingly, a lot of people outside of Tacloban had likewise turned to Facebook as a means of getting information about the super typhoon. Private chat messages and Wall posts flooded the accounts of those who were in Tacloban when Super Typhoon Haiyan struck. The majority of these correspondences were from families and relatives of Tacloban residents from different parts of the world. Indeed, it was from them that aid reached those who were in Tacloban faster than that which came from the government.

Money from family members and relatives working in Singapore, Japan, USA and other countries were transferred to kin based in Manila, Cebu, Davao or other key cities in the Philippines. This money was then used to buy food and water, which were remarkably transported to Tacloban despite limited access to ports and roads during that time. Cash was useless during the first few weeks after the super typhoon hit since most of the shops and markets were closed. The relief goods then were the lifeline of the surviving residents.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Undeniably, the development and use of technology has changed the way communities have organized and expressed themselves. This is evident with the increasing use of social media. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, have not only revolutionised the way people communicate but also the way people facilitate relationships, especially among those who are dispersed geographically (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004).

Interestingly, these transformations within the community have reciprocally influenced the development and use of the social media technology. The last five years have seen an increasing role of social media during disasters, making it one of the most popular sources of information during emergencies, next to radio and television (Lindsay, 2012). It has been used by individuals and organizations to send out warnings, update their families and friends of their whereabouts and condition, mobilise volunteers, and raise funds for disaster relief (Crowe, 2013; McWilliam, 2013; Muralidharan, Rasmussen, Patterson & Shin, 2011; Dabner, 2012; Sutton, Palen & Shklovski, 2008; Yates & Paquette, 2011).

Compared to traditional internet and communication technologies (ICTs), social media has the ability to both provide access to timely information and promote social connectedness among its users. This social aspect of technology has encouraged researchers to look beyond social media as an emergency and disaster management tool and utilise it as a means to foster “social capital,” an important aspect in building disaster-resilient communities (Taylor, Wells, Howell & Raphael, 2012; Dufty, 2012; Aldrich, 2012).

*Social capital* describes how networks and resources within the community are available to people through their connections to others (Aldrich, 2012). This concept is now gaining attention in disaster management literature as most researchers and practitioners observe that reliance on technological, scientific, economic, financial, and political means alone are insufficient in post-disaster recovery (Dynes, 2005). They argue that survivors with strong social networks have access to needed information, tools and assistance and therefore, recover faster and better (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004; Joshi & Aoki, 2014).

*Social media*, as a social networking system, uses the natural connections between people to fill the connectivity gap created by dispersed populations who no longer share a common geography but still maintain relationships, such as families and friends. As more people gain access to communication technology, social media can offer potential for forming new partnerships as groups that previously worked in isolation can be connected to new networks they once had limited access to.

The Philippines, with a total population of 92 million, has over two million of its nationals working overseas (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014). This means that one in 47 Filipinos has a family member or close relative who is working outside the country. Significantly, despite being an archipelago, Filipinos are known to have strong kin-based networks (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). It is no surprise then that the Philippines is reported to have the biggest number of Facebook users in relation to its actual population (Universal McCann, 2008).

The use of Facebook by Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan is a prime example of how social media extended the geography of the city’s social capital. It illustrated that social cohesion is a good defence during disaster and can be utilised

no matter how geographically dispersed a community is. As a developing country with limited technological and scientific resources, this is a Filipino asset that, if reinforced, would prove beneficial during disasters.

In the Gallup-Healthways Global Well-Being Index for 2013, the Philippines registered a high level of community well-being and a thriving social well-being at 42 percent and 35 percent, respectively. The index, which sought to measure people's perceptions of their well-being, was done before Super Typhoon Haiyan happened. It recognised the Philippines' unique opportunity to capitalise on its assets, which include a balanced economic outlook (despite reported poor financial well-being) and resilience against external shocks during the financial crisis (Yanoria, 2014).

Interestingly, looking at the country's social capital by analysing a national survey on social relations, Abad (2005) found out that Filipinos are very strong in maintaining close contacts with close family and friends or bonding social capital. However, there is a scarcity in bridging social capital, which denotes a general lack of trust towards strangers or people who do not belong to their personal network. The isolation of the poor and marginalised sectors is also suggested. According to the survey, those who bond and trust more are likely to be males, urban residents, better educated persons, those with higher family incomes and, to some extent, older people.

Unfortunately, this national social capital is reflected in development and disaster management efforts in the country. Characterised by social inequalities and unreasonable government policies, Ranada (2014) refers to this as "the calamity of mistrust." This is further complicated by the "politics of risk" between the government and the NGOs' disaster management efforts (Bankoff & Hilhorst, 2009).

In a survey conducted by Porio (2011), residents of flood-prone areas in Metro Manila were asked: "Whom do you ask for help during floods, tidal surges, and emergencies?" The results revealed that forty-five percent (45%) of respondents said they would ask help from relatives. Only thirteen percent (13%) would seek help from their local authorities.

Recognising this socio-political condition, there is clearly a need to explore ways in strengthening the social capital of communities in the Philippines, especially

those who are most vulnerable to natural disasters, such as the city of Tacloban. With the widespread and noteworthy use of Facebook after Super Typhoon Haiyan, most disaster management and development practitioners are now looking into the potential of the said social networking system. As an open and more accessible channel of communication, it is hoped to allow more collaboration, cooperation, and wider information exchange – especially among the marginalised and poor communities.

With this conceptualisation and on-the-ground realities in mind, this research then is guided by the central question:

***To what extent did Facebook strengthen and utilise the social capital of Tacloban City in the face of Super Typhoon Haiyan?***

To answer the overall question, the following sub-questions are also asked:

- 1. What were the different types of social capital available in Tacloban City following Super Typhoon Haiyan?**
- 2. Who did the survivors from different economic backgrounds contact after Super Typhoon Haiyan? Why did they choose these networks?**
- 3. What are the social factors that facilitated Facebook to utilise the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan?**
- 4. What are the social factors that limited Facebook from utilising and strengthening the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan?**

### **1.3 Overview of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight parts. The first part is this introduction which provides the background, outlines the relevant concepts, and presents the research question of this case study. The second part is the literature review, which gives a theoretical foundation of the concepts through which the questions will be approached and answered. The third part familiarises the reader with the Philippine society and politics as it focuses on Tacloban City, the location of the study. The

fourth part describes the methodology used, including the writer's research philosophy, as well as logistics and practice (such as site selection, research timing, and ethical concerns). The fifth and sixth parts describe the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan and the extent to which Facebook strengthened and utilised this social value, respectively. The seventh part probes further into the formation of the city's social capital through basic concepts of Filipino social psychology and political culture. This thesis concludes with a summary of the results and its implications in the development of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan.

## CHAPTER 2: DISASTERS, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

*“Crisis – a term borrowed from medicine and describes a phase in the condition of a patient when a timely intervention can spell the difference between recovery or decline, or life and death. The Chinese were correct in combining two ideograms: it’s both danger and opportunity.”*

*– Randolph David, Filipino sociologist*

In order to better understand the ideas outlined in the previous chapter, this literature review provides a theoretical backdrop on the concepts of disaster resilience, social capital, and social media. It is divided into five parts: (1) the definition of resilience and its application in disaster management; (2) the origin of social capital and its related components; (3) the role of social capital in building disaster-resilient communities; (4) the rise of social media as an important technology during disasters; and, (5) the role of social media, particularly Facebook, in enhancing social capital during disasters. It concludes with a section on the available literature – thus highlighting the research gap – on disaster management, social capital and Facebook use in the Philippines.

### 2.1 Building Disaster-Resilient Communities

Communities helping themselves before outside aid arrives is the vanguard of humanitarian action. This is what the literature has been suggesting through the concept of *resilience* in disaster management since the 1980s (Dufty, 2012; Ronan & Johnston, 2005). From the Latin word *resilire*, which means to ‘leap back, rebound or recoil,’ (Prosser & Peters, 2010) resilience was first studied within the context of how ecosystems respond to natural disturbances. It is assumed that an ecosystem, as a network of interactions between organisms and their environment, can adapt organically to natural hazards. Hence, without humans and their social spheres, hazards are simply natural events (Haque & Etkin, 2012).

This paradigm regarding resilience during disasters, however, is a product of theoretical and practical constructs that have seen much refining and reshaping over the last four decades (Manyena, 2006). The history of its application has been disputed, especially regarding its origins and adaptations in various disciplines.



Consequently, this has effects on how it is being utilised in disaster management practice and policy (Aldunce, Beilin, Handmer & Howden, 2014).

### ***2.1.1 The meaning of resilience***

In classical mythology, the symbol of resilience was the reed because of its capacity to both sway in the breeze and to withstand the fierce storms that would uproot mighty trees (Prosser & Peters, 2010). In the English language, the first serious use of the term “resilience” was in mechanics, in 1858, referring to the quality of steel beams to withstand severe pressure without breaking (Alexander, 2013). Eventually, this would be used in everyday speech, referring to an individual’s indomitable spirit or, in a more conservative sense, a tendency to resist change. Nowadays, a resilient person refers to someone who can weather the storms of life and emerge unscathed.

The field of Physics, which is considered to be the pioneer in using the concept, uses resilience to describe objects that are invulnerable to the impact of external forces (Prosser & Peters, 2010). Meanwhile in Chemistry, resilience refers to the capacity of a body to return to its original form (Wilson, 2012). In Engineering, resilience is a measure of a material’s capacity to withstand impact, as well as to absorb and release energy through elasticity when stressed (Atkins & Escudier, 2013).

However, it is in the field of Social Sciences that the study of resilience has significantly evolved (Manyena, 2006). In a more general sense, resilience is used in the field of Health to describe immunity to sickness. In Psychology and Social Work, it refers to a capacity to function in immensely demanding settings, as well as the ability to cope with stress (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2008).

Norman Garmezy is attributed to be one of the pioneers in conducting research on resilience in the area of psychology. Garmezy’s investigation regarding competence, schizophrenia and the psychopathology of children in stressful situations led him to investigate why some patients could ‘bounce back’ and do well in life while others could not. He identified differences in the backgrounds of the two group of patients and suggested that the availability of psychosocial resources might

contribute to counteracting the negative influence of adversity and promote behavioural adaptation (Garcia-Dia, DiNapoli, Garcia-Ona, Jakubowski & O'Flaherty, 2013).

This analysis of individual risk and adaptability then encouraged further research on adults and later, within group settings. In Sociology, resilience is used to describe the capacity of groups to cope with stresses resulting from changes in their environment. It was also applied in Business Management to describe the capacity of an organisation to use disruptive events to propel an organisation to move forward (Whitehorn, 2011).

As references to resilience have continued to increase, so have the criticisms. Across these definitions, however, there is a general consensus on two important points: first, resilience is better conceptualised as an ability or a process rather than as an outcome; and second, resilience is better theorised as adaptability than as stability (Norris et al., 2008). Auspiciously, these two points on resilience aptly characterise a dynamic and complex context such as a disaster.

### ***2.1.2 Disaster resilience: paradigm, policy, and practice***

For many years, disasters have been viewed as natural phenomena which humans have to deal with (Dynes, 2005; Bhatt & Reynolds, 2012). For countries that have monetary and scientific resources, the best strategy to make themselves safe is to control nature by applying geophysical and engineering knowledge to public policy (Aldrich, 2012; Haque & Etkin, 2012). Since there are fewer casualties in more developed countries, this technocratic approach has been widely adapted, especially by developing countries.

However, this traditional paradigm fails to recognise the growing costs associated with responding to disasters – especially in a context where repeatedly raising operating budgets is not an option (Prosser & Peters, 2010). Moreover, this form of disaster response uses a pathological perspective of social work wherein disaster survivors are seen as victims or people with a disorder or problem (Dynes, 2005; Greene & Greene, 2009; Wang, Chen & Chen, 2013). This is most evident among poor communities, which are seen as most vulnerable during disasters.

While it is obvious that natural calamities such as major floods and earthquakes have killed many people in the last two millennia, it is the “secondary and tertiary effects of these events that most often cascade into other socioeconomic processes, break down resource thresholds, and ultimately may cause the most human suffering” (Haque & Etkin, 2012, p. 5). Amartya Sen (1981) even went further by proposing that famines and epidemics are not caused by natural events per se but the social conditions that limit the access of the poor to food and nutrition. With inadequate resources, the poor’s reliance on outside humanitarian aid before, during, and after disasters has only proven to be unsustainable, thus placing more lives at risk (Gaillard & Mercer, 2010).

Development economists have come to a similar conclusion, suggesting that disasters are, to a large extent, human-induced and are, to a less extent, predictable. These experts have calculated risk indices, or expressions of the relative vulnerability of a country, and urge that disaster relief should be planned according to particular geographical, social, and cultural conditions (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004). Researchers have also suggested that countries mainstream disaster prevention into their annual development plans.

From a development perspective, resilience has been defined as the capacity to meet developmental tasks in spite of serious threats (Greene & Greene, 2009). Additionally, rehabilitation and reconstruction programs are considered development opportunities (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004). Not surprisingly, the recent years have seen terms such as ‘building’ or ‘making’ cities resilient to denote, among others, efforts taken by various stakeholders to address issues of urbanisation and climate change, prevalent in many cities in developing countries (Manyena, 2006; Joerin, Shaw, Takeuchi & Krishnamurthy, 2012; Mileti, 1999; Bhatt & Reynolds, 2012).

Internationally, the UN Millennium Declaration of 2000 and the accompanying UN Millennium Development Goals have brought about an increasing awareness on the integral link between reducing poverty and natural disasters (Cutter et al., 2008). Meanwhile, the Hyogo World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in 2005 in Kobe, Japan identified several ways for building hazard resilience. The top two ways are integrating disaster prevention and vulnerability reduction

perspectives into sustainable development policies and increasing local capacities, such as state institutions and community mechanisms (UNISDR, 2005).

Locally, this has led to a growing shift to instead 'build up' the available mechanisms that are 'built-in' within the communities (Mayena, 2006). Following a socio-ecological definition of resilience, communities have the inherent structures and coping mechanisms that will make them less vulnerable to natural calamities (Mileti, 1999; Bhatt & Reynolds, 2012). Disasters only happen because there are "failures [in the] social system" (Aldrich, 2012, p. 2).

Ultimately, this has prompted a new way of conceptualising disaster management wherein human institutions and their capacities are viewed both as a resource and a liability (Onstad et al., 2012; Luna, 2007; Wilson, 2012). In this paradigm, vulnerability is a function of human behaviour (Greene & Greene, 2009). The community is vulnerable when its exposure to natural hazards is greater than their pre-event, inherent characteristics or qualities of social systems (Haque & Etkin, 2012).

In other words, allowing the system to absorb the impacts of disasters will develop a community's resilience over time, as this will naturally strengthen the inherent structures of a community and its ability to re-organise, change, and learn in response to a threat (Dynes, 2005; Cutter et al., 2008). Linking this to the condition of the environment and the way the community treats its resources determines the community's sustainability. This "ability to tolerate – and overcome – damage, diminished productivity, and reduced quality of life from an extreme event without significant outside assistance" (Mileti, 1999, p.4) is what we now call disaster resilience.

### ***2.1.3 The primacy of community in disaster resilience***

Central to most models of resilience is the strengths-based approach, which highlights the pre-existing abilities and resources of the recipients and takes into account their social and cultural sense of resilience and tenacity (Manyena, 2006). It assumes a community's inherent resilience by using its "protective factors," which include attitudes, skills, assets, history, and culture (Wang et al., 2013; Greene & Greene, 2009). The key elements to make these factors work are social order, its

everyday relations to the habitat, and larger historical conditions that shape society (Haque & Etkin, 2012).

Using the strengths perspective, Wang, Chen and Chen (2013) studied the Jialan village after Typhoon Morakot struck Taiwan in 2008. They observed that although Jialan was worst hit, the reconstruction work was carried out more quickly and effectively compared to other villages. After several in-depth interviews with policymakers, social workers, resource coordinators, and leaders of the indigenous communities, they found out that the village's recovery was due to the effective use and coordination of community resources.

Moreover, there was an availability of social assets such as community self-help groups, religious beliefs, mutual assistance and the character strengths of the indigenous people (such as optimism, flexibility, and sense of humour). It helped that the central government directly supervised the local government, which minimised the red tape in delivering rehabilitation efforts. Moreover, the NGOs worked from within the community itself, which made recovery assistance directly felt by the people.

As with most studies on disaster resilience, Wang et al. (2013) confirmed that most of the problems in Jialan Village resulted from human causes. Unequal distribution of resources hindered community unity. The failure to include local views in the remediation of river banks increased discontent and other risk factors.

Clearly, the community is an integral part of resilience. Cutter et al. (2008) defines community as "the totality of social system interactions within a defined geographic space such as a neighbourhood, census tract, city or country" (p.599). However, a defined geographical space and sub-populations may have different levels of vulnerability and resilience that could result in disparity in the speed and quality of recovery.

This is where community-based strategies are held to be more appropriate and sustainable since it comes from the community. While the role of the outsiders is also supported and facilitated, anything that is innately present within the society, such as indigenous knowledge and capabilities, will most likely be sustained over a longer period of time (Bhatt & Reynolds, 2012). Moreover, because resources and

knowledge are readily available, community-based strategies are cost-efficient and are easy to replicate. Indeed, it is even more significant to train people how to manage their household resources and make it adaptable to hazards rather than seeking external assistance.

However ideal, community-based approaches are also deemed limited in their effectiveness. Oftentimes, these are done in isolation to other communities and lacks national recognition. There is also a tension between natural community processes and development project designed by “support” agencies, such as dealing with inappropriate mandate or timetable or controlling personnel. Pressures also arise among members of the community themselves (e.g. assigning of leaders and priorities) (Bhatt & Reynolds, 2012).

Meanwhile, Geoff Wilson (2012) conceptualised a framework for understanding community resilience by emphasising that a community has three basic capacities: the *economic*, *environmental*, and *social capitals*. *Economic capital* refers to the available financial resources that will be invested in the community for business development, civic and social enterprise and wealth accumulation. *Environmental capital*, the most recent type identified in the literature, refers to the natural and biological resources and its relation to the society. *Social capital*, on the other hand, describes how well social, political, and cultural networks are developed within a community.

The “process [of] linking a network of adaptive capacities to adaptation after a disturbance or adversity” is what constitutes community resilience (Norris et al., 2008). In fact, most researchers believe that risk reduction and emergency management by themselves will not necessarily build disaster resilience in communities. It is the complex blend of behaviours and interactions that develop the community’s ability to *utilise* and *sustain* its available resources in responding to, withstanding, and recovering from adverse situations (Dufty, 2012).

This is what Haque, Khan, Uddin & Chowdhury (2012) discovered in their analysis of disaster management and public policies in Bangladesh. While individual stakeholders continue to make significant contributions in responding to disasters,

interaction among stakeholders could have multiplied single, stand-alone efforts. Instead, there were divisive partisan politics and a lack of good governance.

Hence, the community is not just a sum of its parts, such that a collection of resilient individuals does not guarantee a resilient community. Instead, it is a “collective interaction within a geographic space rather than simply a group that shares a few common characteristics” (Cutter et al., as cited by Onstad et al., 2012, p.567). This “glue that holds communities and other social networks together” (Cao, Lu, Dong, Tang & Li, 2013, p. 1672) is what the literature refers to as *social capital*.

## **2.2 Social Capital: The Value of Networks**

Similar to resilience, social capital is also a highly contested concept (Halpern, 2005). It has become a buzzword among political and academic elites, though the term remains relatively unfamiliar to the general public. A glance at the term denotes ‘community,’ ‘social fabric’ or how people are connected to each other.

Some critics argue that it is just another sound bite largely devoid of meaning (Fine, 2007). Nevertheless, to other researchers, social capital is one of the “most important and exciting concepts to emerge out of the social sciences in fifty years” (Halpern, 2005, p.1). Further, social capital is unique in its ability to bridge the theoretical gap between individual and community that spans from the micro to the macro in an interactive and independent manner more effectively than many previous socio-economic/-political theories (Dynes, 2005; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010).

Broadly speaking, social capital is defined as “the social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them and the value of these for achieving mutual goals” (Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000, p. 1). The concept has an immediate intuitive appeal as it merges two distinct disciplines of sociology and political economy. It describes how the networks and resources within the community are available to people through their connections to others (Aldrich, 2012).

There have been various attempts to pinpoint the first use of social capital as a term. One approach is to go back to literature that explicitly use the term. Another

is by taking key elements, such as trust or networks, and review existing literature relating to these elements. A third, but very extensive approach, is to include all theories which seem to be related in some way to social capital, even though they make no direct reference to the term itself (Schuller et al., 2000).

Halpern (2005), in his book *Social Capital*, took the third approach and cited the observations of social thinkers as early as the eighteenth century. He started with Alexis de Tocqueville who, over a hundred and fifty years ago, wrote what he saw was the foundation of American democracy: “intellectual and moral associations in America – an association which unites the energies of divergent minds and vigorously directs them toward a clearly indicated goal” (de Tocqueville, as quoted by Halpern, 2005, p. 5). Next was Emile Durkheim, who undertook the now-famous analysis on linking suicide with social bonds (Gunnell, Middleton, Whitley, Dorling & Frankel, 2003). Finally, Adam Smith who drew attention to the importance of mutual sympathy, networks, and values in sustaining markets (Bruni & Sugden, 2000). Most literature, nevertheless, would point to three authors who have generally been credited with introducing social capital to the theoretical debate: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam (Schuller et al., 2000).

### ***2.2.1 Pierre Bourdieu: Social capital as another ‘form of capital’***

The birth of mainstream academic interest in social capital can be dated back to the late 1980s. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) noted that economists had neglected the importance of huge areas of social and economic life. This worldview has so dominated much contemporary thinking that it affected even public policy and the study of social sciences.

He argued that economic orthodoxy was artificially limiting itself to the study of a narrow brand of ‘practices’ that were socially recognised as ‘economic.’ In so doing, it was missing the fact that capital presents itself in three fundamental forms: namely, economic, cultural and social capitals (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) offered the following definition of social capital:

Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. *Acknowledging that capital can take a variety of forms is indispensable to explain the*



*structure and dynamics of differentiated societies.* [emphasis added] (p.119)

The use of 'capital' signals the intention of addressing different resources of power, with Bourdieu initially emphasising economic and cultural capitals. In fact, Bourdieu's concept of capital is almost synonymous to power (DeFilippis, 2001). He saw one's own supply of social capital as dependent on one's location within the social order. Hence, social capital rested on economic capital – those who already have more continue to dominate while those with little have small chance of acquiring more (Aldrich, 2012).

### ***2.2.2 James Coleman: Social capital as a function in accessing resources***

Approximately the same time as Bourdieu, the American sociologist James Coleman published a paper that attracted much interest in the concept of social capital. For Coleman, social capital was significant as a primary way of understanding the relationship between educational achievement and social inequality. Using a series of longitudinal studies of sophomores in US state and Catholic high schools in 1980 and 1982, Coleman noted a markedly higher levels of attainment in most subjects among pupils in Catholic high schools (Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman, 1985). He suggested that certain norms (such as the higher expectations of teachers in schools), obligation and social networks were particularly beneficial for pupils coming from the less advantaged background (Joshi & Aoki, 2014; Schuller et al., 2000).

Coleman then defined social capital as a function, the way a person acts within a social structure to make the most of one's resources (Halpern, 2005). He offered further refinement by viewing social capital as intellectual currency to understand the relative strength of families and communities. He explained that social capital is a composite of direct and indirect resources that are a by-product of social networks and social support systems amongst family, friends or community members (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010).

By using this linkage, Coleman somewhat confirmed Bourdieu's conception: the powerful remained powerful by virtue of their contacts with other powerful people. Social capital is neither a mechanism, a thing, nor an outcome – it is anything that allows people or institutions to act so they can have access to resources

(DeFilippis, 2001). By exploring how the resources of social capital might counterbalance low levels of human and cultural capital, Coleman was able to demonstrate ways in which social capital appeared to interact with other aspects of stratification – at least in the area of education (Schuller et al., 2000).

### ***2.2.3 Robert Putnam: Social capital as a means towards common good***

Perhaps the widely quoted definition of social capital is by Harvard professor, Robert Putnam. In his seminal study called *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam (1993) pointed to the notion of civic community as a variable in explaining the difference in the performances of regional governments in Italy. He noted that the difference in effectiveness of regional governments – their speed of action, the efficiency with which they worked and the way the public perceived them – could not be put down to the size of their budget or policy frameworks. Based on a detailed compilation of evidence, Putnam's conclusion instead pointed to the vibrancy of the associational life and level of trust between strangers:

These communities did not become civic simply because they were rich. The historical record strongly suggests precisely the opposite: They have become rich because they were civic. The social capital embodied in norms and networks of civic engagement seems to be a precondition for economic development, as well as for effective government. Development economists take note: Civics matters. (p.37)

Putnam then analysed this conceptualisation in the context of the United States and wrote about the perceived decline of civic engagement in the country. The short article entitled “Bowling Alone” caught the attention of many. He used an activity as mundane as bowling to argue how activities that used to be highly associational and fostered wider social fabric are now diminishing (Putnam, 2001).

As with any growing trend, Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital has been a target of major criticism. First, Putnam's scientific foundation of introducing the concept of social capital has been found to be misleading. Although he used big data sets in proving his idea, it was pointed out that his statistical evidence was either overly represented or downplayed (Fischer, 2005).

Second, as a concept, it tends to expand in all directions. While it allowed sociologists to enter the field of economics through this ‘metaphor,’ it is too vague

and makes itself unnecessary because of its oversimplification (DeFilippis, 2001). It can be applied to a huge range of social issues in so many different contexts as to lose any distinct meaning (Fine, 2007).

This prompted questions about what makes up social capital and how it is measured. How can one tell that social capital is present and it is growing? What activities make up social capital? Is it attending church outings, joining sororities, playing bridge, having family dinners, doing good volunteering, voting, or professing one's faith (Fine, 2007; Fischer, 2005)?

Nevertheless, these criticisms did not deter the growth of interest and literature that sprung from this controversial concept (DeFilippis, 2001). Economists and development theorists, including the World Bank, utilised social capital in suggesting new ways of building and managing wealth (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Halpern, 2005; Abad, 2005). These discussions were particularly hinged on Putnam's (1993) succinct definition of the concept:

'Social capital' refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. (p.36)

Breaking social capital into three sub-components – networks, norms, and trust – has allowed further investigations of the concept. These sub-components are recognisable in almost any form of social association. Hence, this made it easier for researchers to identify – even quantify – the presence and level of social capital in a given social context (Jung, Gray, Lampe & Ellison, 2013; Kwon, D'Angelo & McLeod, 2013).

#### ***2.2.4 The three components of social capital: Networks, norms, trust***

*Networks:* This sub-component can be illustrated with reference to one of its most familiar forms – the traditionally, locally embedded community or 'neighbourhood' (Halpern, 2005). However, this interconnectedness can also extend even to stock market exchanges, European political networks, or street gangs. Manuel Castells (1996) described networks as "open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as long as they share the same communication codes (for example, values or performance goals)" (p.470).

In most cases, the community and the networks that partly comprise it may be defined geographically – especially in rural settings. In other cases, its boundaries may be vague (Cutter et al., 2008). Furthermore, the network can be described by its *density* (the proportion of people who know each other) and *closure* (the dominance of intra- versus inter-community links).

*Norms:* This sub-component refers to the rules, values, and expectations that characterise the members of a network or community. Most of these social norms are unwritten. Yet, there is a tacit awareness for one to do something for (behavioural component) or feel towards a certain group (affective component) (Halpern, 2005).

*Trust:* The third sub-component is one of the least topics discussed in the field of sociology. It lends itself to many a philosophical and political debate, with a puzzling interaction between institutions and individuals. Yet, the importance of trust is pervasive in almost every aspect of social life – from marriage to market development (Schuller et al., 2000).

Francis Fukuyama (1995), an influential interpreter of the concept, looks at social capital as ‘mutual trust.’ Building on the component of norms, he defined trust as the “expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of the members of the community” (p.26). However, this definition by Fukuyama assumes an existing moral consensus among the members of the group.

Still, this view agrees to an essential feature of all trust relations: it is reciprocal and usually self-reinforcing in nature (Jung et al., 2013; Dussaillant & Guzman, 2014). “Trust tends to evoke trust, distrust to evoke distrust” (Fox, as cited by Schuller et al., 2000). As with conventional capital, those who have social capital tend to accumulate more – it is a “resource supply [which] increases rather than decreases through use and which (unlike physical capital) becomes depleted if not used” (Putnam, 1993, p. 4).

Putnam (1993) further emphasised trust when he suggested social capital as an important ingredient for economic development. He cited the rapidly growing economies in East Asia, where there is a dense social network and most of the

businesses include extended family or close-knit ethnic communities, like the overseas Chinese. He argued that this kind of set-up does not just foster trust, it also lowers transaction costs, and speeds up information and innovation.

This reveals one important characteristic of social capital: it can be converted into other kinds of benefits, like financial capital. Using the components of networks, norms, and trust, social capital can also describe the benefits individuals can access through their social network. These benefits may include emotional support, material support, and novel information (Jung et al., 2013).

However, this view imposes restrictions on those who are not part of the network and on those who do not share the same values as the other members of the community. Social capital then becomes the value derived from being a member who has access to resources within the community that are not available to non-members (Huysman & Wulf, 2004; DeFilippis, 2001). This is where social capital, as “the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p.226), can bring intended and unintended negative effects as well (Aldrich, 2012).

### ***2.2.5 Types of social capital: Bonding, bridging, and linking***

The sub-components of social capital have facilitated the use of the concept across different social contexts – from family to communities to the state (Halpern, 2005). Still, social capital has been criticised for functionalism and for failing to address issues of power and conflict. To address this, Putnam introduced the different types of social capital: *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* (Schuller et al., 2000).

In social capital literature, ‘bonding social capital’ is generally synonymous to ‘strong ties’ and it refers to the connections among people who share similar demographic characteristics and values such as family members, close friends, neighbours, and work colleagues (Abad, 2005). These are links between like-minded people, or the reinforcement of homogeneity. While it may be strong, it can also result in higher walls excluding those who do not qualify (Schuller et al., 2000). It also produces the least valuable exchanges of resources and information (Lin, 2001).

‘Bridging social capital’ is associated with ‘weak ties’ as it describes relationships amongst people who are more distant and dissimilar in characteristics such as age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, and education (Cao et al., 2013). It thus refers to the building of connections between heterogeneous groups. While these are expected to be more fragile, they are more likely to foster social inclusion (Schuller et al., 2000; Lin, 2001).

The third type of social capital, ‘linking social capital,’ recognises that while social capital has been conceptually defined as “social good,” (Putnam, 1993) many forms of networks are not equally accessible to anyone (Halpern, 2005). Although this is the result of weakest relationships, linking social capital generates the most valuable outcome, as it connects individuals with institutions who have relative power over them (e.g. to provide access to services, jobs, or resources) (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Lin, 2001).

Unlike bonding, it is bridging and linking that are characterised by exposure to and development of new ideas, values and perspectives (Szreter, 2000; Gannon, 2013). Social capital then allows investigation into the quality of the set of relationships of a social group to pursue its shared goals more effectively than would otherwise be possible (Szreter, 2000). This value of social capital is what the literature on disaster resilience focuses its attention on.

## **2.3 Social Capital in Building Disaster-Resilient Communities**

Several studies have considered the importance of social capital during disasters (Munasinghe, 2007; Cox & Perry, 2011; Islam & Walkerden, 2014; Dussaillant & Guzman, 2014). These studies all recognised that social capital is the basis of community response. When physical infrastructure, technology, and information channels fail during disasters, social capital is the only resource that remains intact (Dynes, 2005). In situations where speed, coordination, efficiency and cohesion spell the difference between life and death, “social capital is a lifeline” (Ranada, 2014).

Social capital is also suggested to better predict disaster recovery (Aldrich, 2012). Most rehabilitation efforts are focused only on the restoration of the economy and physical infrastructures (Dynes, 2005). The concept of social capital recognises the importance of resources and challenges at the local level that are often overlooked during disaster recovery, such as post-disaster mental health (Wind, Fordham & Komproe, 2011) or pre-disaster leadership and collective practices (Joshi & Aoki, 2014; Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004).

Tierney (2013) adds that rehabilitation becomes more manageable by analysing recovery and resilience from the individual to the societal level. However, most studies on social capital fail to take into account the complexities of recovery and resilience process. Families recover differently based on various dimensions, such as their psychological well-being, household relations and well-being, infrastructure repair, and most especially, their economic capacity.

This is where social capital becomes a double-edged resource during disaster (Aldrich, 2012). Social capital can overcome barriers to collective action and allow a speedier mobilisation of physical, informational, and financial resources. On the other hand, it may also be utilised to limit and oppress disadvantaged sectors of the community (Jennings, 2007).

One of the most published examples of this case is Hurricane Katrina, which showed how race and class significantly shaped disaster response (Henderson & Hildreth, 2011; Reininger et al., 2013). Messias, Barrington and Lacy (2012) noted how Latinos struggled with language issues in understanding the dangers of Hurricane Katrina. Consequently, he observed how these communities were heavily reliant on their close networks for timely information, evacuation plans, and key resources (such as cash and transportation). However, these existing social networks were disrupted and strained by overwhelming needs, limited financial capacity, lack of transportation, and the actual threat of deportation.

To sustain themselves, the Latinos formed new networks, albeit still within their own Spanish-speaking circles. This is consistent with the findings of Hawkins and Maurer (2010) among African American residents in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. They relied on, built upon, and collapsed all levels of social

capital for individual, family, and community survival. Similarly, they exhausted their bonding social capital because they had difficulties utilising their bridging and linking social capitals, which could have provided longer term survival and wider community revitalisation.

In Bangladesh, Islam and Walkerden (2014) noted how bridging relationships can become less active and sometimes break down due to poverty, disaster impact, competition and conflict over access to external support. In response to this, it was remarkable how communities have sustained their bonding relationships. Families and relatives agreed to reduce their food intake, find alternative income (like selling family assets), and engage in other livelihood options through temporary migration.

Munasinghe (2007) suggests that the poor are relatively more resilient than the wealthy. Describing the 2004 Asian Tsunami, he observed that the poor are able to fall back on traditional, informal mutual-help networks, whereas the rich are dependent on mechanical devices and services of domestic aides. He then compared this to Hurricane Katrina, where geographical scale of damage was much smaller and wherein technological resources and warnings were readily available, yet the affected communities suffered social breakdown, which included violent armed robbery and looting.

However, this deduction offers an oversimplified approach to complex broader structural issues of poverty and inequality. Most poor families living in vulnerable areas wish to independently solve their problems but are limited by their lack of assets and income (Islam & Walkerden, 2014). This is further complicated when their relationship to the state is considered.

A recent theme in the disaster literature now looks into the potential of social capital to tap not only into the informal, local networks but also the more formal channels of planning and policy, such as the state and its related agencies (Lalone, 2012). Some of this literature suggests that the government has a key role to play in disaster recovery (Berke, Chuenpagdee, Juntarashote & Chang, 2008; Aldrich, 2011; van Voorst, 2014). When communities are slow to recover after disaster, the government's responsibility is to facilitate community members to effectively



access both bonding and bridging social capital and leverage their shared histories and perspectives (Grube & Storr, 2014).

This is what Gannon (2013) pointed out regarding the practical challenges and pressures in implementing social capital. He noted his personal experience in the communities along Japan's north-eastern coastline of Kamaishi City. He argued that while Kamaishi has high levels of bonding and considerable levels of bridging social capital, it has differed because it has strong linking social capitals. He attributed this partly to several and distinct decades-long efforts to bring local government, business, and non-profit leaders together with leading national and international experts to recalibrate and revitalise a local economy that had been declining well before the disaster struck.

Alternatively, the presence of high bonding social capital is eroded when politics influence disaster recovery programs. Berke et al. (2008) studied six villages in Thailand to determine how social capital and external aid delivery influence community performance in the conservation of mangrove ecosystems. Their findings indicate that social capital represents a potential for collective action but the design of aid programmes, which are often politically-driven, may prevent such action. Attaining external support from politicians even caused suspicion and mistrust among closely-knit communities and the distribution of goods eventually became a competition among families and relatives.

The study of van Voorst (2014) however criticised this dualistic idea of state and society and instead focused on the ways in which society, particularly the poor, engage with the state. Looking into the most flood-prone neighbourhoods in Jakarta, it highlighted that in a country, such as Indonesia, with a history of corruption and outright neglect for the people, networks are considered access to social justice. Since this sense of social justice is not achieved through formal agencies of government, people join informal social networks that promise financial and social security. It is interesting to note, however, that the dichotomy between the state and the non-state diminishes as the actors simultaneously interact with both society and the state.

While it is useful to see how social networks cut across the formal and informal spheres, van Voorst (2014) nevertheless pinpointed how this has reproduced – instead of altering or contesting – the larger unequal structures. Rather than demanding a solution to the flood problem from the Jakarta government, selected residents participate in a flood-management system in exchange for personal benefits. Worse, others got involved in civil militia organisations which, although cooperate with the government to assist victims to gain access to justice, are also known to participate in classic extortion and stand-over tactics.

On a related note, Ganapati (2012) pointed out how women in Turkey were additionally oppressed because of their networks after the earthquake. Most community-based networks perpetuate gender-based assumptions, which limit their participation in search-and-rescue operations and in negotiations regarding the amount of aid their families should be getting. Meanwhile, civic networks inadvertently placed them in conflict with state authorities by encouraging them to actively participate in civil affairs.

Furthermore, Aldrich (2012) discovered that the large amounts of financial assistance can break down existing social relationships. After the 2004 Asian Tsunami, young female orphans in villages in India received huge compensation packages from NGOs and the government. This makes them more attractive to the “marriage market” and thus pushed many uneducated girls to marry early.

These case studies likewise point to the importance of place and identity as one looks into the role of social capital in community disaster recovery. Cox and Perry (2011) underscored that the psychology of place to community and individual resilience is critical, especially when place is disrupted not only through displacement but as a result of myriad economic, material and symbolic losses and changes associated with disaster events. This is particularly important for economically and socially vulnerable segments of society, which are often neglected in the goal towards ‘normalcy’ – a highly contested benchmark after disaster.

One case in point is the study of Aldrich (2011) on Tamil Nadu, India – a region that practices social caste system – after the 2004 Asian Tsunami. Villages

with institutionalised social capital in the form of tribal councils effectively connected to outside aid, which resulted in speedy recovery. However, it also simultaneously slowed down the assistance for the minorities, outcastes, and non-members by excluding them (often systematically) from the recovery process.

In a way, the current literature on the inclusion of social capital to the field of disaster resilience has pointed towards the quality, accessibility, and flexibility of social systems in the face of natural calamities (Aldrich, 2012). It indicates the need to investigate ways in which all capitals – human, financial, technological, environmental – can be shared and utilised by most members of society during crisis. There is also an emphasis on the importance of better access to bridging and linking social capitals, preferably through more formal networks.

## **2.4 The Rise of Social Media as an Important Technology during Disasters**

The necessity to connect especially during disasters is further accentuated by the people's actual behaviour in and attitude towards social media. This was seen in major disasters such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake (Muralidharan et al., 2011), the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami (Hjorth & Kim, 2011), the 2010 Canterbury earthquake in New Zealand (Dabner, 2012), the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami (Murthy, 2013), and the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in China (Cao et al., 2013). All of these have shown the potential of social media not only in saving lives (Wiederhold, 2013) but in facilitating a better and more democratic recovery process (Alexander, 2014).

### ***2.4.1 Social media: From social to informational network***

Social media refers to internet-based applications that enable people to communicate and share resources and information (Lindsay, 2011). The term is often interchangeably used with 'social networking sites,' which are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public profile so they can connect with other users within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). While both are online platforms that serve to build social relations, social media is said to have been a concept developed from social networking sites (Veerasamy, 2013).

This can be observed by looking at the earlier forms of social networking sites such as Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook. Slogans of these sites describe their services as an online community that connects people through their existing (and growing) networks of friends. Implicitly, these sites were originally intended to address the networking or communication needs during the first decade of the twenty-first century (Veerasamy, 2013).

In order to do that, these sites developed features that allow various media content to be generated, shared, and modified by the users themselves. Whereas traditionally, consumers used the Internet to simply expend content, they are now utilising these online platforms not only to initiate social interaction, but also to gather information and discuss public opinion. This represents the social media phenomenon (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011).

There currently exists a rich and diverse form of social media sites, which vary in terms of their scope and functionality (Alexander, 2014). Wikis are web-based platforms in which co-authors collectively build textual and visual websites. YouTube and Flickr are video and photo-sharing websites. Facebook caters to the general masses and LinkedIn for the professional network. Weblogs (or blogs) is a discussion or informative site published on the web. Twitter is a microblogging site that enables users to send and read 140-character messages called “tweets” and asserts on its ability to offer real-time updates.

Perhaps the most recognised role of social media in a disaster context is its support to traditional channels of communication. Conventional broadcast media can be limited in terms of the information and the type of message it sends out during disasters. Social media, on the other hand, fills in the gap for accurate, reliable, and timely information that is otherwise hard to obtain before, during, and after a crisis (Lindsay, 2011; Yates & Paquette, 2011).

In fact, social media is now seen as an integral channel through which information about disastrous events have come to ‘break’ or ‘circulate’ within the public (McCosker, 2013). It has also become a platform for action and reaction in relation to these events. This is because social media allows for user-generated and

user-directed information – details that come from and actually matter to the people during the time of crisis (Sutton et al., 2008; Bakshy, 2012; Alexander, 2014).

Moreover, information gathered from social media (termed as ‘crowdsourcing’) is fed to traditional media to provide real-time accounts of disasters – another phenomenon called “new media.” While most people turn on their television sets to get details, many are simultaneously using their tablet or smartphone to get a “clear image of nationwide awareness at the time of crisis” (Wiederhold, 2013, p.781). Additionally, there is a growing number of people who now prefer turning to social media over the traditional media for information during disasters (Murthy & Longwell, 2013).

In light of this, the literature have looked at how social media is systematically and scientifically utilised in various disaster response and recovery activities. These include disseminating information (Dabner, 2012), conducting emergency communications and issuing warnings (Crowe, 2013), receiving and responding to victim requests for assistance (Kirac, Milburn & Warden III, 2013), monitoring user activities to establish situational awareness (Vieweg, Hughes, Starbird & Palen, 2010) and uploading images to assist in damage estimates (Guan & Chen, 2014). Moreover, related technologies are now being developed to assess and analyse the large data sets available in social media (Travis & Sykes, 2012).

#### ***2.4.2 Social media: From informational to resource network***

Another notable development in social media use has been the growing role of individuals, non-profit aid groups, and other NGOs in raising funds and delivering services for disaster responses. Hundreds of millions of dollars were raised online within weeks following major disasters such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and 2011 Japan earthquake (Gannon, 2013). Significantly, whereas traditional media employ negative themes of crisis and conflict, non-profit groups use positive themes of morality and responsibility to encourage streams of visitors to increase donations channelled through their social networking sites (Briones, Kuch, Liu & Jin, 2011; Muralidharan et al., 2013).

Since social media is a self-organising, voluntary, and open participation system, it encourages collaboration and cooperation between members of groups

for their mutual benefit (Cao et al., 2013). It also reduces transaction costs of maintaining a larger and potentially more diverse social network (Jung et al., 2013). Owing to its accessibility and economy, it has been referred to as “a tool of grassroots crisis communication” (McWilliam, 2013, p. 92).

More importantly, a sense of community is fostered in social media. Its multiple functions allow access to information and resources and address psychological damage and feelings of affectedness and pain during disasters (Taylor, Wells, Howell & Raphael, 2012; McCosker, 2013; Hjorth & Kim, 2011). Users do not only get information but also ask favours from other users because they believe that they can actually turn to several people in their network (Jung et al., 2013; Warschauer, 2003). This is one prime example of social capital in action.

## **2.5 The Role of Social Media in Enhancing Social Capital during Disasters**

Ressa (2013) defines social media as one’s “physical social network on steroids.” At the most fundamental level, social media functions using the natural connections between people (Crowe, 2013). Social media tools can support how people build, maintain, and benefit from social relationships on a larger scale (Jung et al., 2013).

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), there are seven functional blocks of social media: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputations and groups. Generally, these blocks refer to the extent which users reveal or make themselves available, communicate, exchange or distribute content, form relationships or groups, and influence social media. Each of these functions have corresponding implications such as issues on privacy, appropriateness of content (offensive versus acceptable, personal versus copyrighted material), intimacy (or selective presence, where one can be visible to some while hidden to others), and other membership rules or protocols.

Using this framework, they further argued that social media sites tend to concentrate on three or four blocks. Facebook puts top priority on the *relationships* block, followed by *conversations, presence, identity, and reputation*. Given the strong

connection to real-world contacts and the scale of usage (Bakshy 2011), Facebook is an ideal platform to test how social capital is utilised.

### ***2.5.1 Facebook as an instrument in building social capital***

Facebook started out as a niche private network for Harvard University students (Christakis & Fowler, 2011). Now, with over 1.2 billion active users, Facebook is considered to be the world's most popular social network (Sedghi, 2014). While the majority of its users are students and young adults, its fastest growing demographic are individuals aged 55 and older, with women outnumbering men 2:1 (Keitzmann et al., 2011).

Users join Facebook by creating a homepage that typically provides overt details about the user's identity (e.g. sex, religion, political affiliation) as well as likes and dislikes. When creating a homepage, the new user is asked a series of standard questions as a means of composing the homepage. After creating a homepage, the user can add friends by searching for them by name or email address across the Facebook member database.

Friends can "talk" to one another via Facebook's instant messaging function, via its email function, by writing on the wall of the friend's homepage or simply by posting a current status update. They can share photos and videos through which their friends will react or comment. They can also browse through an aggregated history of their friends' recent activity called the "News Feed."

According to Facebook, the average user has 200 friends (Sedghi, 2014). "Facebook friends" mutually acknowledge their friendship and display each other as friends on their homepages. These friendships can form online or, as is more often the case, function as an acknowledgement of and supplement to offline relationships (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). In effect, Facebook relationships can represent and function as strong ties (family and close friends) or weak ties (acquaintances) (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). One feature that has probably helped Facebook succeed, compared to other social networking sites, is that it only allows people to see direct friends and occasionally friends of friends. This reduces the number of links between total strangers and makes people feel that their online life is relevant to their real-world social networks (Christakis & Fowler, 2011).

Facebook is thus useful in building networks very much akin to building social capital. Information-seeking behaviours, among specific uses of Facebook, most positively contribute to bonding social capital (Kwon et al., 2013; Ellison et al., 2011). Meanwhile, the intensity of Facebook use, particularly posting a status or joining groups, are positive predictors of bridging social capital (Lee, Kim & Ahn, 2014).

However, as a mediated form of communication, Facebook has its limitations. Burke, Kraut and Marlow (2011) found that direct, person-to-person exchanges were still shown to be associated with increases in bridging social capital. They add that communications shared on Facebook are not strong enough to create the kind of close bonds that are characteristic of one's closest friends and family. People still communicate with those they are closest to in a variety of ways – from email to SMS to, most importantly, face-to-face.

Moreover, it is important to mention that in social media, relationships determine the what-and-how of the information exchange. Reputation is a matter of trust even in social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). It is still the value of identity – not the scope – of users that determine the value of relationships and exchange of resources (Ellison et al., 2011).

Theoretically, growing a network as large as possible likely reduces the degree of separation of individuals. The more connections a user has and the more central their position is in their network of relationships, the more likely that user is influential (Kietzmann et al., 2011). However, reputation not only refers to people but to content. Trust still determines the quality of resources involved in individual relationships and how these resources are used, exchanged, or transformed (Cao et al., 2013).

### ***2.5.2 The use of Facebook in building social capital during disasters***

Notwithstanding these limitations, Facebook has been proven to help build social capital even in the face of disasters. This was documented during the 2011 Queensland floods, wherein the increased status updates from friends encouraged one resident to seek information about a missing relative on her Facebook Wall. Due to the scope of its network and its time-specific features, Facebook was effective in



the timely sharing of complex yet correct information rapidly with a large audience (McWilliam, 2013).

Another successful case is the University of Canterbury's (UC) Earthquake Recovery Site Facebook page, which was established a few hours after the 2010 Christchurch earthquake. The analysis of Dabner (2012) showed how the site served both as an informative and supportive platform not only among the students of UC but also among the parents of students, students from other tertiary institutions, and worldwide, community-based workers. Having a specific purpose and an affective feature were both attributed to the success of this effort.

While there may be some potential advantages to using social media in building social capital, there are also some possible issues and drawbacks associated with its use especially during disasters and emergencies. The first refers to the accuracy and validity of information. Although information gleaned from social media is generally accurate, some of these are likewise generally exaggerated (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Related to this are out-dated information, which can be maliciously used by organisations who intentionally aim to confuse, disrupt or otherwise thwart response efforts. These include mischievous pranks to outright acts of terrorism (Dufty, 2012).

The second pertains to administrative issues such as privacy and costs. Although some users claimed to understand privacy issues, they were reported to upload large amounts of personal information on social networking sites (Noor Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2012). This makes the maintenance of social networking sites costly. The number of personnel required to launch, maintain and manage social media program for emergencies and disasters remains unclear (Lindsay, 2012).

The third refers to technological limitations. The University of Canterbury was fortunate because, although power was out in the entire region, the university had its own supply of electricity and its technology infrastructure was still operational (Dabner, 2012). Nevertheless, this poses the boundaries of social media in addressing community disaster resilience as it moves across the "online" and "offline" worlds within the geo-social terrain (Hjorth & Kim, 2011).

Also, communities may adopt different patterns of communicative behaviour and social control. There is now a new reality of sociocultural diversity and mobility, a changing balance between public and private sectors, fluidity of social ties and identities, and new inequalities based on uneven distribution of technological improvements (Resnyansky, 2014). Nevertheless, as more people gain access to communication technology, it is probable that social media can offer potential for new partnerships as groups that previously worked in isolation can be connected to new networks that they once had limited access to (Crowe, 2013; Ressa, 2013).

## **2.6 Research Gap: Facebook use in the Philippines during Disasters**

Coleman (1988) emphasised that the forms of social capital are activity-specific. This research adds that these are also context-specific, an important consideration in assessing and interpreting the role and influence of social capital among diverse groups in disaster situations. In light of the literature presented, the contextualisation of the role of social media in building social capital during disasters is very applicable to the Philippine setting.

The Philippines is reported to have the biggest number of Facebook users in relation to its actual population (Universal McCann, 2008). As of December 2011, the Philippines has 33,600,000 Internet users or equivalent to 32.4% penetration. Meanwhile, there are 29,890,900 Facebook users in the Philippines as of December 31, 2012 equivalent to 28.8 penetration rate (Marcial, 2013).

Interestingly, these rates are growing amidst wider societal issues of intractable poverty and fragile peace-and-order situation in the country. Socially, there is a general attitude of mistrust among people who are not part of their immediate personal connections (Abad, 2005; Ranada, 2014) – including the state. The studies of Abinales and Amoroso (2005) and Brower and Magno (2011) both pointed to a history of a state captured by sectoral interests, which results in a recurring dilemma of state-society relations that diminishes the ability of the state to provide basic services and economic development to its people. This is further reflected in the way the state addresses the nation's social, economic and political issues interacting with and acting upon environmental and natural phenomena

(Bankoff, 2007). Disasters have become simply a fact of life that Filipinos have had to learn to live with and deal on their own over the centuries (Luna, 2007).

This is not to mention that there is also the present “politics of risk” between the government and the NGOs’ disaster management efforts (Bankoff & Hilhorst, 2009). The Philippines has a well-established institutional and legal framework for disaster management, including built-in mechanisms for participation of the people and NGOs in decision-making and programme implementation (Luna, 2001). Yet, the importance of political and social goals shared by NGOs and civic societies are often overshadowed by the economics and ownership models held in some Western concepts of voluntary organisation (Brower & Magno, 2011).

Despite these conditions, Filipinos are known for their admirable resilience, especially during disasters. David (2001) noted how a typical Filipino wage earner relies on the pool resources of a kinship group, and to a certain extent, the neighbourhood community for survival. It is in the interest of this research to discover how social media can utilise and strengthen these existing social practices in the face of disaster.

Moreover, while there are several studies on the use of Facebook in utilising and strengthening social capital after disasters, most of them are focused on a certain community within a given physical geographical space. The Philippines has over two million of its population living in other countries (National Statistics Office, 2013). Using Facebook, Filipinos have pushed the physical boundaries of social capital and extended it through their networks in other parts of the world. It is in this juncture of the geography of power, risks, and relationships during a disaster in the Philippines that this case study is placing itself.

Finally, this thesis concentrated on the city of Tacloban as it faced one of the most powerful typhoons that hit the planet in recorded history. The literature showed the possibilities and limitations of social media in utilising the social capital of communities in the face of disaster. With the intensity of Super Typhoon Haiyan and the remarkable mix of social capital in Tacloban, to what extent can social media contribute to a social resource that is assumed to make the Taclobanons resilient in these difficult times?

## CHAPTER 3: TACLOBAN CITY

*“Pay attention to local geography.”*

*– Melba P. Maggay, Filipino writer and social anthropologist*

Tacloban City is the capital city of Leyte, a province in the Eastern Visayas region in the Philippines. Its east coast directly faces the Cancabato Bay in the San Juanico Strait, which divides the two main islands of Leyte and Samar. Owing to its geography and location, Tacloban has developed into one of the most important cities in the country, acting as the gateway for trade, education, and health services for the Eastern Visayas region (National Statistical Coordination Board – Eastern Visayas, 2013).

### 3.1 From a fishing village to a highly urbanised city

Tacloban started as a small fishing village under the parochial administration of Bassey in Samar. When it was discovered by the Augustinian missionaries in the eighteenth century, the place was referred to as *tarakluban* or literally translated as “the place where the ‘taklub’ is.” *Taklub* is a basket-like contraption made of bamboo that is used to catch fish, crabs, and shrimps (National Statistical Coordination Board - Eastern Visayas, 2013). It later evolved to its present name, Tacloban.

During this period, Tacloban was one of those villages or *barangays*<sup>3</sup> throughout lowland Visayas that were coerced to settle into towns organised around a newly built church with a resident friar. This was done to subjugate the locals into a Christian community so they could be easily used for forced labour and collection of tribute, which was a major source of revenue for the early colonial state (Constantino, 1975). This long and brutal process, called *reduccion*, remapped the Philippine settlement patterns into today’s *cabaceras* (district capitals), *poblaciones* (towns), *barrios* or *barangays* (villages) and *sitios* (hamlets) (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> *Barangay* is a Tagalog word which originally meant “boat,” referring to a boatload of related people, their dependents and slaves. These kinship groups were led by a *datu*; hence, *barangay* also meant the following of a *datu*, a political community defined by personal attachment, not territorial location (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

Over the course of time, there was a significant lack of civilian and military officials who would oversee a colony comprising of 7,107 islands. This compelled Spain to establish *encomienda* across the archipelago despite its disastrous effects when it was enacted in Spanish America. This system instituted administrative provinces by further clustering the settlements into a defined geographical area headed by an *alcalde mayor* or provincial governor (Cruz, 2014). As part of this restructuring, Tacloban was officially proclaimed as a municipality and became a major trading town between Leyte and Samar in 1770 (National Statistical Coordination Board - Eastern Visayas, 2013).

Towards the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, during an age of increasing growth in global commerce and advances in economic organisations, Spain had to reconsider the way it ruled the Philippines. Extensive trading brought by the British Empire, through English East India Company, opened the Philippines to world trade (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). This made port cities into commercial, managerial, and professional centres. On 26 February 1830, owing to the ideal location of its port, which was well-sheltered and had adequate facilities, Tacloban became the capital of the province of Leyte (National Statistical Coordination Board - Eastern Visayas, 2013).

However, it was not until the American occupation that Tacloban was opened to world trade. This was the first act of Colonel Murray, the first military governor of Leyte, in 1901 to gain the confidence and friendship of the locals who were doubtful of the intentions of their new colonisers ("History," n.d., para. 4). Tacloban eventually became the centre of commerce, educational, cultural and social activities of Leyte. Educational institutions such as Leyte Normal School (now Leyte Normal University), Leyte High School (now Leyte National High School), and Leyte Trade School (now Eastern Visayas State College) were later established in the capital.

On 25 May 1942, the Japanese Imperial forces landed in Tacloban, which signalled the beginning of their three-year occupation in Leyte. They were particularly interested in the province because of its diverse agriculture of rice and corn that could replenish their depleted larder (Ara, 2008). Like most residents of municipalities occupied by the Japanese, Taclobanons suffered from civilian

beatings and torture. Lear (1952) recounted how the *kempeitai* (Japanese military police) headquarters in Tacloban was fitted with detention chambers on the ground floor and torture chambers upstairs.

On 20 October 1945, combined Filipino and American troops headed by US General Douglas MacArthur landed in Palo, some fourteen kilometres away from Tacloban, making Leyte the first province to be liberated from the Japanese forces (Official Gazette, 2014). As it is centrally located in the heart of the Philippine archipelago, Leyte was a strategically important island. It was already earmarked as an important staging and operating base of the Americans as they launched their amphibious assaults against the Japanese, which is now known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in history (Yenne, 2009). Three days later, on 23 October, Tacloban temporarily became the capital of the Philippines until the complete liberation of the country on 27 February 1945 (Amascual III, 2010).

On June 20, 1952, Tacloban was created into a chartered city by virtue of Republic Act No. 760 signed by the then President Elpidio Quirino (National Statistical Coordination Board - Eastern Visayas, 2013). On December 18, 2008, Tacloban was converted into a Highly Urbanised City (HUC), making it the first HUC in Eastern Visayas and 34th in the Philippines (Gabieta, 2008). Consequently, this separated Tacloban from the administrative control of the province of Leyte.

### **3.2 The land of the powerful Romualdez Clan**

In the last decade, Tacloban had a high administrative standing as one of the top ten performing and competitive cities in the Philippines, receiving numerous local and international awards for governance (SunStar Tacloban, 2012). Despite these, Lange (2010) argued that the economic structure of Leyte remained primarily dependent on natural resources, without any significant modern industries. He attributed this to the control of local elites, who did not actively pursue structural change during the significant development periods of the province.

Indeed, the present-day Tacloban still characterises the typical *cabecera*: with its centuries-old Sto. Niño Church, the schools and universities, the market or businesses, and the city government halls surrounding the public square called

*plaza*. Notably, this form of town planning during the 1700s also reinforced a social class of affluent families, who lived near the plaza mayor. These prominent individuals were entrusted with local rule during the Spanish occupation owing to the lack of military and civil authorities that would oversee the islands.

These “the elite of the locality” (Constantino, 1969, p.3) were called *principalia*. They were the former *datus* and their descendants who were rewarded with positions after they brought their people voluntarily into the *cabecera*. Now adjuncts of Spanish power, they used their position to further accumulate wealth by demanding excess payment and reviving debt slavery (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). They also took advantage of their colonisers’ unfamiliarity with land ownership by claiming vast landholdings, which formerly belonged to the barangays (Constantino, 1975). These land-grabbing activities were often led by or done in partnership with the clergy (Iyer & Maurer, 2009).

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, families who lived in rural towns used to till family farms and grew rice and vegetables for their own consumption. However, in a modernised economy where the clergy charged numerous fees and taxes from birth to marriage or illness to death, everything suddenly required money. When the peasants ran out of money, they would offer their lands in exchange for loan from the *principalia* and the clergy. Since the mode under which they acquired the loan was designed to profit the elites and the clergy, most peasants would eventually dispossess their lands (Cruz, 2014).

These new land tenure and property relations created a society of peasants integrated into an exploitative political and social system for the benefit of the few (Sicat, 1994). This would go on for centuries, where uncertain land reforms discourage investments in agriculture leading to broader societal problems such as food insecurity, rural-to-urban migration, urban informal settling, poverty traps for farmers, and widespread existence of spurious and fake land titles (Cruz, 2014). In Leyte, this was aggravated by the decision of the local landed elite to carry on with resource production because of the high world market prices for raw materials and the province’s favourable agricultural conditions (Lange, 2010).

When the United States took control of the Philippines in 1898, there was an introduction of reforms regarding land and property rights. Iyer and Maurer (2009)

noted three: the redistribution of large estates to their tenants, the creation of a system of land titling, and a homestead program to encourage cultivation of public lands. However, they added that these reforms were slowly implemented because of their high costs (having to negotiate prices in purchasing land from the friars) and political constraints, particularly on those who were reluctant to evict informal cultivators especially on public lands.

The American colonisers suddenly found themselves having to go through several legal battles only to have their cases dismissed because the landlords always had powerful linkages with the municipal councils. The local landed elites either worked for or controlled the municipal councils (Sodusta, 1981). Rent-seeking, or the manipulation of economic and political conditions to increase one's share of existing wealth without creating wealth, became possible to lower the costs of colonisation (Lange, 2010).

In Leyte, the monopoly of ruling elites impeded the control of the utilisation of rent. Don Miguel Lopez Romualdez, who was described as "successful in combining public office and private business" since 1873 (Lange, 2010, p.61), established the Romualdez clan as Leyte's most powerful family. Don Romualdez once served as an assemblyman for Leyte and mayor of the city of Manila during World War II. His political reach advanced with the election of his son, Daniel Romualdez, as representative of then Leyte's fourth district in 1949 and later as Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1957 to 1962 (Arinto, 2013).

The marriage of Imelda Romualdez, first cousin of Daniel Romualdez, to Ferdinand Marcos, who became the president of the Philippines in 1965, gave the absolute political control in Leyte to the Romualdez family. However, while it strengthened the ties between the local and national elites, Lange (2010) argued that this did not benefit Leyte economically. Due to the outstanding power of the Romualdez clan and the absence of any competing families in the province, there was no need to legitimise the utilisation of rent. The local elites did not prioritise technological and industrial investment, rendering the province unprepared for the opportunities brought about by the import substitution phase in the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, unrestrained rent-seeking was rampant, benefitting only a small family circle.



Cruz (2014) claimed that these extractive institutions were the roots of Philippine underdevelopment, particularly widespread corruption, inadequate protection of property rights, and lack of effective constraints on the elite. Notably, in the disaster-affected areas of Leyte and Eastern Samar, approximately 32 percent of the total population were informal settlers. This made the security of land tenure as one of the fundamental challenges in post-Haiyan recovery (Fitzpatrick & Compton, 2014).

More significantly, these difficulties are further complicated with the expressed rivalries of political families. Alfred Romualdez, the incumbent mayor of Tacloban City, is the son of Alfredo Romualdez, who was also the mayor of Tacloban from 1998 until 2007. The older Romualdez is Imelda's younger brother (Arinto, 2013). On the other hand, the incumbent president of the Philippines is Benigno S. Aquino III, the son of the late Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. who was assassinated under the Marcos dictatorship. This friction between the central government and the local authorities of Tacloban was said to have greatly influenced the entire disaster response following Super Typhoon Haiyan (Tran, 2014).

### **3.3 A population dispersed geographically and socio-politically**

#### ***3.3.1 Separate islands, separate societies***

These fragmented pockets of power across the Philippines may be attributed both to the archipelagic characteristic of the country, which local autonomy developed ahead of a central authority. Doronila (1994) described the formation of the Philippine state as commencing from the local barangay units, which were later consolidated into a pyramidal structure under the Spanish colonial government in Manila. However, while Spain claimed formal possession of the archipelago, the forests and hills were home to many peoples and tribes joined together. Over time, these mixed barangays resisted the impositions of Spanish religious, economic, and social stratification by retaining a social structure led by a *datu* (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

Spain's mercantilist policies likewise reinforced the formation of a disintegrated young Philippine state. Again, Doronila (1994) indicated that when

the Philippines was opened to foreign trade in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European businesses and financial houses bypassed Manila by directly transacting with provincial agricultural export producers, particularly the sugar planters in various provinces. These producers created their fortunes by associating with European capitalism, instead of contributing to the economic development of major cities in the Philippines.

This resulted in an archipelago characterised by “a series of separate societies that entered the world economic systems at different times, under different terms of trade, and with different systems of production” (McCoy, as cited in Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p. 83). It prevented communities from finding unity based on a shared exposure to the global capitalist market. Instead, regional or language group consciousness persisted, along with increasing social class tension between growing rural poor and emerging rural elites (Cruz, 2014).

### ***3.3.2 Colonial clientelism, collective cynicism***

When the Americans came the elites, who were without any significant experience in national-level democratic institutions, were given “representation” in the Philippine Assembly, a political norm at the core of American constitutional politics (Corpuz, 1998). Proclaimed under the efforts of “political tutelage” to teach Filipinos the virtue of democracy, the American colonial authorities instead introduced indirect election of Philippine provincial governors only to local influential families because “the masses are ignorant, credulous, and childlike” (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003, p. 263). This created an elite electorate process marked by factional rivalries and personality issues (Teehankee, 2002).

Thus, the Philippine Assembly consisted of provincial politicians who had to look for support from municipal politicians. These provincial factions became a major building-block in the political manoeuvring of national elections (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). Instead of focusing on institutional concerns laid out in the Malolos Congress (or the First Republic of the Philippines), state-building shifted to “politics” or the battle to capture the machinery of representation (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

The first generation of Filipino leaders under the American regime were the established elites who turned away from the revolution, organised under *Partido*

*Federal* (Federalist Party) in 1900 (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). The *Federalistas* were publicly committed to Philippine autonomy under the American colonial mantle, although most of its leaders privately hoped for the annexation of the Philippines to the US. They believed that the only practical route was collaboration with the new colonizers and tutelage training. This political pragmatism became the foundation of conservative Filipino nationalism (Corpuz, 1998).

The *Federalistas* were openly supported by the Taft administration, which did not only give them a privileged position in the Philippine Commission (the small, American-dominated body that advised the governor-general) but also ample opportunities to expand their thin elite Manila political base throughout the provinces. Taft wanted to ensure that the whole of the Philippines would embrace American democracy, so the *Federalistas* were likewise given a powerful role in making appointments to key provincial offices (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). However, when the *Federalistas* failed to extend its influence across the islands, this support shifted to the younger, provincial-based political leaders of the *Nacionalistas* (Teehankee, 2002).

The *Nacionalistas* were composed of revolutionary veterans, intellectuals, and members of the urban middle classes and “lower class” who re-entered political life (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). At a time when the Americans imposed an anti-sedition law declaring advocacy of independence a crime punishable by death, they perfected a political alternative to revolution and resistance (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). They can be described as patronage-oriented and internally mobilised, as they consistently worked to consolidate their power at the national level yet maintained the same responsiveness to their allies in the provinces who desired a degree of autonomy from colonial supervision (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003).

However, with the Filipinisation of the colonial bureaucracy in 1916, leaders from relatively humble background began using their control of the colonial state to engage in “primitive accumulation,” which turned them into a powerful *political-economic* class that has power over the distribution of resources centred on the family or political clan (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). As these representative institutions emerged before the creation of strong bureaucratic institutions, politicians took advantage of ideological divisions and distributed amongst themselves the “spoils” of American colonialism by demanding reforms to enlarge

their access to resources. As a result, “combining corruption and competence would become a pattern among state leaders” (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p.142).

Socially, these politicians likewise asserted themselves by consciously forming a ruling class that shaped what is said to be the “national elite” of the present-day Philippines. Abinales and Amoroso (2005) noted how legislators went to the same receptions, attended the same churches, lived in the same residential areas, shopped in the same fashionable streets, had affairs with each other’s wives, and arranged marriages between each other’s children. For the first time, there was a deliberate effort from the national elites to disconnect and isolate themselves from the masses.

Meanwhile, the introduction of public education, the teaching of English, the establishment of a Manila-centred mass media, and industrialisation profoundly altered social life (Corpuz, 1998; Iyer & Maurer, 2009). Rich *mestizo* families continued to prosper under American rule, their properties untouched and their children entering occupations (such as medicine and law) aimed at enhancing status (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). American values of individual achievement, commercialism, and populism spread at the expense of an already marginalised Spanish cultural matrix (Banlaoi, 2004).

During the Japanese occupation, the pretence of democracy became even shallower. Most Filipino leaders who collaborated with the Japanese did so for pragmatic reasons – some because the Americans abandoned them; others, in compliance with Quezon’s directive to work with the invaders to prevent political and social breakdown (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). Indeed, the determination of who among the politicians collaborated with the Japanese became one of the pressing issues during post-war politics.

An important new political formation, the creation of the HUKBALAHAP (*Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon* or The Nation’s Army against the Japanese) in 1942, dealt with both the new colonisers and their landlord collaborators. However, members of HUKBALAHAP later found themselves enemies of the state, which was then being re-established by Gen. Douglas MacArthur. The American general instead protected his friends and business associates from prosecution (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003).

This caused a huge division among the members of the Nacionalista party, which monopoly on political power was destroyed after the war. It led to the formation of a new political party called the Liberals, a breakaway faction of new elites whose Commonwealth-era education facilitated their rise out of lower-class origins (Teehankee, 2002). With the backing of the United States, the Liberal Party dominated the Philippine Republic after 1946, which remained dependent on a network of relationships that were established on patronage, especially in the local landed elites.

As the local authorities continued to undermine the capacity and authority of the central state, post-war presidents were unsuccessful in carrying out various economic reform agenda (Doronila, 1994). In effect, American authorities effectively diverted the revolutionary quest for self-government into a simultaneous quest for increased local autonomy, expanded national legislative authority, and more extensive opportunities for patronage (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). The fusion of wealth and power brought about by political connections and backing, instead of productivity, has undermined the post-colonial state's capacity to realise broad national goals for lasting social and economic development (Quimpo, 2007).

Subsequently, with the formal dropping of literacy requirement, political elites now had to convince non-elite groups to vote for them (Teehankee, 2002). At first, patron-client ties and deeply embedded traditions of social deference were sufficient. Later, local landowning elites used a variety of means – kinship, personal ties, offering of jobs, services and other favours – to build a large vote bank from lower social classes (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003).

This “predatory state” has further degenerated the Philippine parties from a clientelist to partrimonialist nature (Quimpo, 2007). It determines the fate of an elected administration that could not afford to alienate the local clans that controlled political factions (and often private armies) in the countryside. By the mid-1960s, there was too much party switching, yielding a high level of public cynicism toward the state (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

### ***3.3.3 Neopatrimonial oligarchy, politically distant majority***

While political parties were formed to train Filipinos as it established a constitutional democracy, these were actually “the cancer in Filipino politics”

(Corpuz, 1998). The system was almost destitute of nationalism when it began in 1907 and void of social ethics since 1946 (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). Political parties have no real members, party funds, stable meetings, or party newspapers. They are only active during the elections. Moreover, loyalty is not to the party nor to its principles, but to particular persons who lead the party at a given moment. Money flows from the candidates' coffers to the local political clans to ensure patronage and delivery of votes (David, 2001; Quimpo, 2007).

Prior to Ferdinand Marcos' authoritarian rule in 1972, a number of scholars in the late 1960s and early 1970s observed that traditional patron-client relationships were slowly diminishing, giving way to a less personality-based political organisation: the 'political machine' (Quimpo, 2007). Marcos knew that the people were already becoming restless with the increasing irregularities of Philippine elections. Since the patron-client fails to give adequate attention to the role of violence and local monopolies in both Philippine politics and social relations, Marcos steadily pushed the limits of private armies, electoral and patronage alliances with older elites until he broke it entirely in 1972 with the declaration of Martial Law (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003).

Marcos' monopoly of political power left pre-martial law political parties severely weakened. Instead, the dictator set up his own political party, the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (KBL or New Society Movement), which consisted of members from the Nacionalista Party, Liberal Party, and other political personalities who were supportive of his 'new society' (Teehankee, 2002). Through KBL, Marcos attempted to centralise authority through dictatorship. He did not, however, succeed because of crony capitalism (Doronila, 1994).

Instead, under Marcos' rule, political clientelism turned into what David Wurfel (1988) termed as neopatrimonial authoritarianism. Although Marcos could not undermine local power, he was able to restructure the influence of clan-based factions in the provinces. To a degree unprecedented in Philippine history, the ruling family lorded over all formal political institutions, including the ruling party (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). Making full use of his dictatorial power Marcos, along with his wife Imelda, exploited the resources of the state for their personal aggrandisement (Quimpo, 2007).

However, with the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino Jr., Marcos' staunch critic, the traditional elite increasingly abandoned Marcos and organised effective efforts under the mantle of the popular widow, Corazon Aquino. The peak of distrust and ultimate discontent of the public towards its government was expressed ironically through one of the best and shining moments in Philippine history: the People Power Revolution (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). Abueva and Roman (1993) noted how the "outwardly, non-traditional, if not revolutionary origins of the Aquino Government [...] created a political climate in which the language of 'people empowerment,' 'democratisation,' 'social justice and human rights,' and non-governmental organisations/people's organisations suddenly became mainstream" (p.29).

Democracy was restored in the Philippines with the passage of Republic Act 7160 or An Act Providing for a Local Government Code 1991 (Teehankee, 2002). As it was implemented over the next decade, it would devolve some of the powers of the national government to local and provincial governments, increase their share of revenue allotments, and give them the right to impose property taxes on state-owned or state-controlled corporations in their localities (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). Nevertheless, many scholars described the country's democracy under Aquino as "elitist" or "a weak state captured by an oligarchic elite" (Quimpo, 2007, p.282).

The widowed Aquino herself hailed from the landed local elites, the Cojuangcos of Tarlac. Refusing to form her own political party, Aquino instead facilitated a neopatrimonial oligarchic state, wherein different factions of elites take advantage of, extract privilege from, and prey upon a largely incoherent bureaucracy, both through political violence and rent-seeking (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). Regrettably, this simply returned the power to clans and warlords that once dominated pre-Martial Law politics and even welcomed back the Marcos family (Abinales & Amoroso, 2006). Significantly, the Comprehensive Agrarian Land Reform Program, an important policy that could have drastically changed Philippine societies, was very slowly implemented due to high compensation costs and the unwillingness of 'landlord-dominated' Congress (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

The Philippines under ex-military general Fidel Ramos propelled the country to economic gains. Many poor Filipinos felt that they were ignored by the

straightforward policies of Ramos, who focused more on economy than on 'politics' (Abinales & Amoroso, 2006). Hence, when former actor Joseph Estrada ran for presidency in 1998, he was backed by a very popular support from the masses. However, only a few months in the office, the Estrada administration was already plagued by scandals and controversies, which involved his family members, mistresses, illegitimate children, friends in show business, gambling partners and late night drinking buddies meddling with the state affairs and public money (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

This resulted in an erosion of public confidence leading to another popular revolution known as 'People Power 2,' making then Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo the head of the state in January 2001 (Teehankee, 2002). Estrada, on the other hand, used his poor supporters' struggle against poverty to highlight the class divide and obtain public backing that will question the legitimacy of Arroyo's administration (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). Arroyo initially promised to build a strong republic above competing societal interests but instead, she combined the old order (patronage politics, the spoils system, and a politicised military) and the new practices (democracy, civil society, and popular participation) to retain in the office and preserve her own power (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

Meanwhile, because of too much 'opposition politics,' the people have grown restless and hopeless. Lower class residents in search of employment continue to migrate from rural areas to cities, causing further complications brought about by overcrowded urban areas (David, 2001). During the height of Arroyo's electoral fraud scandal in 2005, the number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) reached a high of 1.6 million (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2007), which steadily increases up to the present. Abinales and Amoroso (2006) succinctly wrote:

Most citizens have distanced themselves from politics and redirected their energy to finding jobs, preferably outside the country. As one Filipino sociologist and government critic lamented: 'Our people are worried for their families. That is why a considerable number have voted with their feet, by the thousands every day. They fail to see any hope of redemption for the country under the existing political leadership' (p.291).

Correspondingly, the Eastern Visayas Region, where Tacloban is, has recorded a total of 16,000 of its residents who went overseas for work in 2013 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014). In Tacloban City, most families have at least



one relative or immediate family member who works either in Cebu, Manila, or other countries. This is the presently common pattern of social relationships in most provinces within the Central Philippines as shaped by the political conditions of the country.

### **3.4 A population accustomed to typhoons**

Tacloban has a total population of more than 200,000 and a land area of 201.72 km<sup>2</sup> ("City Profile," n.d., para. 1). It has a tropical rainforest climate, typically hot and wet throughout the year and rainfall is both heavy and frequent. The Philippines averages more than 20 typhoons a year, often passing along the central part, where Tacloban is.

The city is divided into 138 barangays, each with its own local government. Figure 3 shows how most of these barangays were located near the coastal areas, making them highly susceptible to natural calamities. Figure 4 provides a detailed view of the city centre. The encircled areas are the locations of this study.

Several powerful typhoons in Leyte were recorded as early as 19 October 1897, when a powerful typhoon ravaged through the municipalities of Tanauan, Palo, and Tacloban. Like Super Typhoon Haiyan, this resulted into a storm surge as high as seven metres. It destroyed the façade of churches, school houses, and bridges up to some areas in Eastern Samar (Lotilla, 2013). The said typhoon was considered the most violent that traversed the Philippine archipelago, as reported in an Australian broadsheet dated 12 January 1898. It described a typhoon and tidal wave which claimed around 7,000 lives, composed of 400 Europeans and 6000 natives (Luces, 2013).

Another newspaper, the now-defunct Washington Herald, reported an extreme weather event on 26 November 1912 which headline was "15,000 die in Philippine storm." It recounted a typhoon that practically destroyed Tacloban City and had wrought damage and loss of lives in Capiz (Diola, 2013). Tacloban at that time reportedly had a population of 12,000, while Capiz had over 20,000 (Luces, 2013).

The most recent and the one being referred to by the Super Typhoon Haiyan survivors was Typhoon Agnes (local name: 'Undang') that hit the country in 1984. This brought a storm surge in Basey, Samar and killed a total of 895 people (Lucas, 2013). This was the benchmark of the Taclobanons' resilience when their city was hit by Super Typhoon Haiyan on 08 November 2013.

Remarkably, although Tacloban City is a fast developing coastal city and is familiar with typhoons, it was said to be ill-prepared for Super Typhoon Haiyan's intensity (Marshall, 2013). Indeed, the resulting catastrophe was unprecedented. Still, the political tension between the local and national government had made the disaster an even more daunting ordeal for this neopatrimonial, oligarchic city.

## **CHAPTER 4: INVESTIGATING TACLOBAN CITY AFTER SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN**

*“Suddenly, all of them wanted to study Tacloban. It has turned into a giant laboratory.”*

*– Consultant for Tacloban City’s urban and environmental planning<sup>4</sup>*

The previous chapters have illustrated the conceptual, socio-political, and geographical context surrounding this research. This chapter will now describe how this study was carried out within those premises and the rationale behind it. As a disciplined inquiry, this aims to present a reliable and systematic plan in answering the research question.

This chapter commences with a discussion on the intent of qualitative research, the design used in this study. This is followed by an exposition of the researcher’s ‘personal context’ – her position in the study, including her philosophical assumptions, backgrounds, and biases that informed her choice of research approach. Research methods including data collection and analysis based on the case context are then explored. Other important issues such as site selection, recruitment of respondents, ethical and safety considerations are also discussed.

### **4.1 An approach towards understanding a typhoon-stricken Tacloban City**

This thesis relied on qualitative methods, specifically a case study approach that employed one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. Qualitative research derived its roots from German thinkers who applied the term *Verstehen* – loosely translated as “to understand” or “to interpret” – in doing sociological research (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). This design advocates the systematic gathering of information on a particular phenomenon from the perspective of insiders, rather than interpreting it from the outsider’s view (Merriam, 2009).

This choice of research design was drawn out from an epistemology of social constructivism, which argues that social reality is created out of human knowledge, beliefs, and meanings based on social traditions and cultural conventions of one’s

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<sup>4</sup> Phone communication, 11 June 2014.

everyday experiences (Social constructivism, 2007). It suggests that ideas, which might appear as inherently rational or natural, are actually artefacts of particular traditions or cultures. As such, social and political practices are not the result of natural or social laws; they are the product of choices informed by contingent meanings and beliefs (Social constructivism, 2007).

This thesis examined social behaviours in a context of amplified political tension brought about by a competitive access for resources after a massive disaster. Hence, it involves assumptions about why people do what they do or think what they think as a matter of intentions or motivations (Gerring, 2007). In view of that, “while rationalists see people making decisions using strategic logic that will maximise their individual interests, constructivists see people making decisions using social logic based on social norms and the expectations of others” (Barkin, 2010, p.50).

Specifically, this research adheres to linguistic social constructivism which implies that knowledge formation takes place in communication, hence social contact. The creation of knowledge cannot be separated from the social environment in which it is formed. This makes the research participants as active co-constructors of meaning and knowledge, where the researcher simply initiates and facilitates an active process of uncovering and acknowledging shared understanding (Adams, 2006).

Finally, social constructivism recognises that due to the mediatory features of languages and other forms of communication, knowledge constructs are first formed between or among people’s psyche, or inter-psychologically, before it is internalised or existed intra-psychologically (Social constructivism, 2007). This makes ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ as a result of consensus among individuals of a social group. This is also the rationale for choosing interviews and focus group discussions as methods of inquiry and for using a thematic discourse analysis in examining the data gathered for this research.

Patton and Cochran (2002) suggested that “in situations where little is known, it is often better to start with qualitative methods” (p.2). Qualitative research looks for a situated or contextual understanding of a phenomenon and not

a generalised truth (Willis, 2007). As shown in Chapter 2, there are a few studies on the role of social media in building social capital during disasters yet none has been done within the Philippine context, specifically on what was dubbed as the “most powerful typhoon that made landfall in written human history” (Sedghi, 2013). Looking into how survivors see themselves and understand their own experiences are then the best place to start.

Furthermore, qualitative research allows for a holistic understanding of the issue being considered as it compiles different perspectives and dimensions that represent complex realities and processes (Creswell, 2014). It holds to an interpretive perspective that reality is constructed through the meanings individuals give to the phenomenon; hence, it has to represent various perceptions on a collective reality (Lapan et al., 2012). Since this study heavily relied on the concept of ‘social capital,’ it was essential that the multiplicity of perspectives was emphasised in the analysis. Likewise, the literature on the use of social media has suggested the empowerment of voices of different groups, especially the most vulnerable to disasters and risks (Crowe, 2013; Murthy, 2013). This design provided that ideal opportunity.

Relatedly, qualitative research employs multiple sources of data rather than relying on a single data source (Willis, 2007). This attribute advances the views of those underrepresented in the society (Merriam, 2009). Bearing in mind the social structure of Tacloban City, a critical perspective that recognises the ways in which power is embedded in society proved to be valuable, especially in choosing a suitable approach for collecting data within a given sector of society.

Moreover, qualitative research gives value to the natural setting of the study (Creswell, 2014). It views meanings as more context- and time-specific (Lapan et al., 2012). This is very important in investigating behaviours in the face of disasters, as communities respond to or recover in different ways and rates (Cutter et al., 2008). More importantly, qualitative research allows an emergent process for research design, which takes a foundational rather than a technique perspective. Qualitative researchers may proceed with some idea of what they will do, although a detailed set of procedures is not yet formed prior to data collection (Willis, 2007). This was

useful in a post-disaster setting wherein the usual pathways of getting information may not be as stable and readily available.

Qualitative research also allows for an iterative process of inductive and deductive data analysis, or that of working back and forth between themes and database until the researcher has established a comprehensive set of themes (Willis, 2007). Rather than determining cause and effect, predicting or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population, qualitative research focuses on understanding how people interpret and give meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). This is valuable in studies within the context of disasters, wherein there is a need to translate existing knowledge into actions and vice versa (Gaillard & Mercer, 2012).

Lastly, qualitative research appreciates the researcher as a key instrument of the study (Stewart-Withers, Banks, McGregor & Meo-Sweabbu, 2014). It acknowledges that the researcher has an effect on the research itself (Lapan et al., 2012). Clough and Nutbrown (2012) argue that “all social research sets out with specific purposes from a particular position, and aims to persuade readers of the significance of its claims. These claims are always broadly political” (p.4). Hence, the following section will now discuss the researcher’s paradigm.

#### **4.2 A personal perspective towards probing a political Tacloban City**

The researcher agrees with other Filipino thinkers who believe that the value of social inquiry is to sensitise one’s self to data and to organise one’s observations so it can help rebuild social institutions (David, 2001). This form of constructivism allows for sociological imagination that permits a person to see her commonality between her personal circumstances and those of her fellow human beings (Mills, 1959). Consequently, this encouraged her to search for collective solutions to shared problems.

In particular, the researcher herself relied on Facebook to get updates from her family and relatives during the Super Typhoon Haiyan. She was based in Wellington, New Zealand as a postgraduate student at the time. While her

immediate family is based in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, her relatives are from a village in Palompon, a municipality that is approximately 120 kilometres away from Tacloban City.

It was through Facebook that the researcher first heard about her relatives, following a five-day news blackout. After the super typhoon, a number of village residents went to Cebu, another major city in the Central Philippines, to seek help from their families and kin. With power and internet connection available in that city, some of them took the opportunity to post photos on their Facebook accounts, which showed the aftermath of the super typhoon in the village.

The photos received many 'likes' and comments, thanking the Facebook user for the update. Calls for action and assistance then became the topic of the comments thread. It helped that the village had an existing Facebook page, which members are now mostly based in different parts of the world. It was used as a platform to organise their own aid and relief program – from the actual fundraising to the sending of the physical goods to their respective families. Their efforts were deemed successful compared to the delayed and inadequate response of the local government during the early, critical period after the super typhoon.

This has led the researcher to investigate whether this can be also applicable to a locality that is relatively bigger in terms of geography, politics, economy and trade, and population. Although the damage caused by Super Typhoon Haiyan was far greater in Tacloban than the researcher's hometown in Palompon, the former has the advantage of technology and wider access to resources. It was the intent of this research to describe the manner and the extent in which these capitals were utilised.

One could say that this form of constructivism also leans towards a transformative paradigm. The researcher believes that understanding the multiple meanings of a phenomenon through social and historical construction also brings to the fore the values held by the community as it operates in the form of rules, norms, and attitudes (Desai & Potter, 2006). In turn, these rules define the roles that individuals play in society.

When these roles come in clusters, they become institutions. Institutions act “as the primary sub-systems of society through which society fulfils the requirement of survival” (David, 2001, p.31). Hence, to inquire of meanings from people is to also know the logic of its social and structural order. This is especially valuable in times of disasters.

This need to highlight social order is influenced by the researcher’s undergraduate training at the University of the Philippines, the nation’s premiere state university known for its culture of cultivating critical thinking and active nationalism. She spent four years in an academic environment wherein to fight poverty and injustice is the *raison d’etre* of higher learning. This constant awareness of an oppressive social order has then guided most of her work in the government and with the communities.

The researcher then considered this thesis as an opportunity to conduct studies that may show how some segments of society are systematically excluded or how their access to social goods are blocked by existing delivery and administrative systems. When approached from the vantage point of justice and equity, such access studies become in themselves detailed investigation into the structure of power in society (David, 2001).

To an extent, this case study described a political framework, which certain values may inadvertently proliferated repressive practices. On one hand, however, critical perspectives may likewise uncover pathways wherein individuals become empowered to transform themselves and the society as a whole (Lapan et al., 2012). Hence, another purpose of this study was to identify and understand how people are able to effectively organise themselves in order to gain some control over their lives, or simply to successfully insulate themselves from the instabilities of daily life. In the process, they will be able to conceptualise a vision for alternative structure that conform with their desire for a just life (David, 2001).

Significantly, the researcher acknowledges that a constructivist paradigm is a two-way process of interaction (Desai & Potter, 2006). It allows for a collaborative partnership with the communities and institutions, such as the government and NGOs, involved in the study. It was the utmost intention of the researcher to



contribute to a better understanding of Tacloban City as it rebuild itself after Super Typhoon Haiyan in the next five to ten years.

Finally, the researcher is a student from a developing country supervised by a university in a developed country. This alone posed several layers of complexities and options. Like most students, the researcher aimed to bring about change and foster better understanding of her own social context in the conduct of her research (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012).

However, her postgraduate training had also made her aware of her position in a scholarly setting, which preserves the presence, concerns and experience of the researcher as a “knower and discoverer” (Miller & Glassner, 2004). This lent the researcher to become an ‘outsider’ in her own home. As Sultana (2007) succinctly puts it:

Doing research at ‘home’ also brings in different dynamics, in terms of concerns of insider-outsider and politics of representation, across other axes of social differentiation beyond commonality in nationality or ethnicity. People placed me in certain categories, exerted authority/subservience, ‘othered’ me and negotiated the relationship on a continual basis. (p.378)

These dynamics definitely influenced the research methods employed in this study. Furthermore, the researcher’s experiences highlighted that most research protocols, which are generally based upon Western culture, may not hold true in non-Western settings (Narag & Maxwell, 2014). The next section discusses in details the specific methods employed in this thesis in relation to that observation.

#### **4.3 Case Study: Examining the Facebook use and social capital of a typhoon-stricken Tacloban City**

The first two sections presented the research methodology or the set of decisions that governed this study. Now, this section defines the research methods or the tools used in investigating the research topic and how these helped in constructing an argument based on the methodology (Lapan et al., 2012). In bounding the presentation of this qualitative study, the suggestion of Creswell

(2014) was followed: *setting, actors, ethical and safety considerations, data collection strategies, data analysis, and verification.*

Also, most qualitative research methods use face-to-face situations wherein the researcher relates to the respondents or to the setting or to both (Lapan et al., 2012). This study was one such case. To reduce the researcher bias, this presentation is also constantly reflective of how the researcher may have influenced the research setting and conversations by her identity, knowledge of the culture and language, customs and etiquette, and perceived power or access to resources desired by the respondents (Creswell, 2014).

A case study is “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (Merriam, 1988, p.9). Although this is one of the most used and most criticised forms of social science research (Willis, 2007), this method was employed because “the product of a good case study is insight” (Gerring, 2007, p.7). The goal of this research is to increase an understanding of the use of Facebook in utilising and strengthening the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan.

#### ***4.3.1 Setting: ‘Downtown’ Tacloban, gated subdivisions, and coastal communities***

This study had three settings: the central business district of Tacloban City, the gated subdivisions that housed the two local NGOs working in the area, and the coastal communities which suffered the most during Super Typhoon Haiyan (see Figures 3 and 4). These were symbolic of the social classes in the city. These settings were the preferred sites for one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions by the research participants themselves.

‘Downtown,’ as what most locals would call the city centre of Tacloban, reflects the influences of Spanish and American colonial rule. It is characteristic of a typical centralised town wherein the market, the church, the government buildings and the schools surround the city square. Its streets bore the names of legislative and judiciary administrators during the colonial periods – with one of its main roads named after Justice Romualdez, relating to the predecessor of the current city mayor.

The city mayor was among the target interviewees of this research. Two weeks before the actual fieldwork, the researcher went to the executive assistant of the mayor to secure an interview appointment. Considering the government protocols and gatekeeping mechanisms, it would take longer if the researcher would go through the usual process of presenting a letter to the Office of the Mayor and wait for their response. It was then fortunate that prior to going to Tacloban, a common friend introduced (via Facebook) the researcher to the executive assistant, who asked to be met at the Tacloban City Hall.

The City Hall stands on top of a hill facing the bay leading to the Leyte Gulf. Outside, there were still tents occupied by various NGOs and government services, like the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the local police. Inside, however, was surprisingly clean and relatively empty. The researcher expected it to be bustling with people who need assistance from the local government. Yet she only saw city hall employees, a few residents, and some street vendors.

It was there that the researcher waited for three hours because the executive assistant kept changing the meeting time. During the meeting, it was very evident how busy the executive assistant was. On the walls of her office were various maps of Tacloban which indicated hazard-prone areas and the new residential and business zoning plans of the city. The office was managing Tacloban's physical rehabilitation, one of the pressing and biggest tasks after the super typhoon.

It was no wonder that the executive assistant was receiving and signing memos, texting, and had to excuse herself once to answer her mobile phone while talking to the researcher. When she was able to give her full attention, she apologised and then asked the researcher to explain very briefly what the research study was all about. The researcher explained the study and quickly asked if the mayor would be available for an interview.

The executive assistant politely declined, saying that six months after the Super Typhoon Haiyan, they had to reduce the time given by the Office of the Mayor for any media or scholarly interviews. She then referred the researcher to the urban

and environmental planning consultant, who also managed the media affairs under the Office of the City Administrator.

When the city consultant was asked where he wanted to be interviewed, he suggested to meet at a coffee shop. Coffee shops with free access to wireless internet had been a burgeoning enterprise in downtown Tacloban, especially after the super typhoon. This Western lifestyle of sitting down over coffee was reinforced by patrons who were mostly foreigners, middle class and upper class Filipinos and international NGO workers.

Another growing business after the super typhoon were hotels and accommodation. One of the interviewees, the city councillor, owned one and asked to be interviewed in the hotel's restaurant. The hotel, which was among the first businesses that re-opened after the typhoon, stood amidst small and medium enterprises such as automobile repair shops, parlours and salons, and grocery stores which were still struggling to recover.

Meanwhile, twenty minutes away from downtown Tacloban were the gated subdivisions, in which a few residential units were turned into offices by two local NGOs that participated in this study. Interestingly, international NGOs occupied most office spaces in downtown Tacloban. The local NGOs told the researcher that, aside from the competitive office space rents, they preferred holding offices away from the city proper because of the high saturation of post-disaster efforts there. Both NGOs had been channelling most of their rehabilitation program in communities that are miles away from Tacloban but were also severely affected by Super Typhoon Haiyan.

Ironically, the two coastal communities that were invited for two separate focus group discussions were not that far from downtown Tacloban. In fact, one community was just a few minutes' walk from the city hall. Yet, both were still complaining of inadequate aid. The abandoned houses, poorly constructed toilets, makeshift houses, and the still-wrecked community hall spoke for themselves. Six months after the Super Typhoon Haiyan, most residents were still living in tents provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

#### **4.3.2 Actors: Local government, local NGOs, and the *barangays***

The actors for this thesis were also categorised into three: the local government, the local NGOs working in Tacloban, and the *barangay*, which is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines. These were scheduled to provide multiple representations of the city, with three selected members of the local government on top of the societal structure and two *barangays* at the bottom. The two local NGOs were assumed to be the middle agency between the State and the people.

Members of the local government included the city vice mayor, one city councillor, and the city consultant. The two local NGOs were named Operation Blessing and Community and Family Services International (CFSI). The two *barangays* were called Barangay 89 (San Jose) and Barangay 48-B (Magallanes). Except for the vice mayor and CFSI, all participants were sought out and invited through referrals by contacts that were established before and during the field work.

The city consultant was the first interviewee of this thesis. He and the researcher went to the same university for their undergraduate degrees. Hence, there was a good level of enthusiasm from both ends, which resulted in the consultant suggesting favourable participants for the study. One was the city councillor, who was known to be active on Facebook especially after Super Typhoon Haiyan. Second was the councillor of Barangay 89, one of the worst hit communities in Tacloban.

This sense of university affiliation was also present when the researcher randomly met a worker of CFSI in a computer shop. The local NGO worker saw the printed interview schedule from the researcher and asked about the study. They both eventually learned that they came from the same university. The researcher later got the permission from the head of the CSFI Tacloban team to hold a focus group discussion among its workers.

The decision to choose local NGOs was to highlight the role of a middle agency that allow Taclobanons or those from other provinces in the Central Philippines to provide assistance to their fellow citizens. This was the prime reason

why Operation Blessing was also contacted for the study. This NGO was referred to the researcher by a common friend in Manila.

Meanwhile, it was also through another common friend in Manila that the researcher was introduced to a Baptist pastor who used to be a resident of Barangay 48-B. This community shared common characteristics with Barangay 89: both were coastal communities, had almost the same intensity of damage from the super typhoon Haiyan, and had residents from the upper middle-class to the lowest. The only difference was that Barangay 48-B was more proximate to the political centre of Tacloban City (see Figures 3 & 4).

The recruitment for participants in the two barangay focus group discussions were both facilitated by their respective barangay leaders. This gesture reflected the trust of the researcher in the local knowledge of the community to identify the appropriate resource persons for a given task. Both barangay leaders asked three days from the initial meeting as an ample time to gather people for the discussion. The councillor of Barangay 89 recruited six participants; Barangay 48-B, seven participants.

Notable, however, was the difference in the characteristics of participants gathered by the two barangay leaders. Both were told that, as much as possible, the study aimed to give equal representation to different levels of society. Yet, Barangay 89 came up with participants who were more articulate, had leadership roles in the *purok* (political sub-division of a barangay), and were mostly female owners of small businesses. Nevertheless, the researcher saw a deeper appreciation of the research process when the barangay councillor pointed out that he included a fisherman along with his 17-year old daughter.

Narag and Maxwell (2014) talked about how being introduced by a person of higher respectability, Filipino residents would consciously present the researcher only to other residents whom they considered to be of higher status in their community. The researcher, although just introduced by the city consultant through a phone call, was received by the barangay councillor very cordially at his own home. He even showed the researcher around the entire barangay, leading to the

barangay hall where they paid courtesy to the barangay captain who gave a rather cold response.

The barangay councillor later disclosed that there was a political rift between him and the barangay captain. Carley and Bautista (2001) observed that, “in general, those who have been elected to barangay leadership have usually come from the ranks of retirees or local personalities close to the municipal or city leaders under whose wings the barangay council serves” (p.118). The political rivalry between the national government under President Aquino and the local government of Tacloban City under Mayor Romualdez had trickled down to the community leadership as well. The barangay councillor ran under the political support of Mayor Romualdez. This provided him more involvement in post-Haiyan forums, making him more visible over the barangay captain to the city consultant.

This was different with Barangay 48-B, which was introduced to the researcher by a former resident. The researcher met the barangay captain at the barangay hall and was received just like any local resident. After putting the agreed focus group discussion schedule on the information sheet given by the researcher, the barangay captain forwarded the task of finding the research participants to the barangay secretary. After which, he said that he will not be available for the focus group discussion.

On the day of the discussion, the researcher was surprised to find no one in the barangay hall. The barangay captain had committed the place to be the venue for the focus group discussion. The researcher then turned to a small store across the barangay hall and asked for any barangay officer present. One of the women there introduced herself as the barangay treasurer, who was having an afternoon break. The researcher asked if she knew about the focus group discussion. The barangay treasurer reasoned that since it was a Thursday afternoon, most people were unavailable.

Fortunately, the barangay secretary came not long after. When she saw the researcher, she immediately and assertively asked the barangay treasurer to just call on anyone who might be interested to join the discussion. They came up with

four men, who were socialising in the middle of the streets on a lazy afternoon, and three mothers.

This indifference from the leadership of Barangay 48-B can be attributed to the poor general perception and low remuneration of those who are working in the barangay (Carley & Bautista, 2001). This was worsened by a disaster situation wherein their proximity from the city proper made them more accessible to the media, the development workers, and the academe who suddenly became interested in them. They could have been suffering from “interview fatigue” (M. dela Cruz, personal communication, June 21, 2014).

It was thus encouraging when the Office of the Vice Mayor immediately granted the researcher an interview on the same day a request was formally given. During the pre-interview, the vice mayor told the researcher that he just recently talked with another Filipino student who was also doing a postgraduate degree in a foreign country. He said he would appreciate it if he could receive the summary of results of these studies.

This perceived privileged access of the researcher to information and economic resources were most pronounced in the barangays. Although the researcher was very transparent regarding her intention and capacity as a student-researcher from a foreign country every time she introduced herself to the communities, indirect expressions of help can still be heard. One barangay leader even remarked that the research could raise awareness among an international audience that would eventually result into tangible assistance for their barangay.

#### ***4.3.3 Ethical and Safety Considerations***

Since this study dealt with human participants, it sought the approval of the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of Wellington prior to the actual conduct of field work. The said formal ethics review helped determine the protocols of this research process before allowing the researcher to proceed. It also ensured that the study and its location were chosen without vested interests in its outcome.

Before an interview or focus group discussion, the participants were given a brief background of the research and what their participation entailed. They were



handed out with a research information sheet and a consent form (see Appendices Two and Three), which were both written in English and in Filipino, the national language of the Philippines. The participants, however, were not forced to sign the consent forms if they decided not to.

In some cases, the researcher had to go through the items listed in the consent form with some participants to facilitate proper understanding. Armed with better awareness of the research process, most participants indicated that they wanted a copy of the summary of the transcribed interviews and findings. They even verified the contact details of the researcher and asked if they could contact her at any time. This level of participant involvement in the research process had never been experienced by the researcher in any of her previous field work.

The participants were also informed that the entire interview or discussion would be recorded. However, they were ensured that these materials will not be used for any other purposes except this study. In fact, the researcher is the only one who can access the recordings and transcriptions. Importantly, interviews and focus group discussions were all confidential. The identity of the participants were protected both in the collection and analysis of the data.

This confidentiality issue had been most valuable when, in one of the barangay focus group discussions, one participant had been giving out unfavourable remarks against the government. Afterwards, the said participant asked if the study was indeed strictly confidential and that her name would not appear in any part of the thesis. The researcher's identity in relation to the government was even questioned and clarified.

These inquiries were positive signs that both the researcher and the participants were aware of their positionality in the entire research process. As a Filipino who is also aware of the non-confrontational manner of her own people, the researcher made it a point to repeatedly encourage the participants to ask any questions before and after the interview or discussion proper. The researcher found this truly helpful, especially as a post-debriefing activity for the participants who were, first and foremost, typhoon survivors.

Understandably, the researcher heard so many complaints from the participants about how they had been interviewed by so many people since the super typhoon. Some even promised to give them money or help repair their homes as an exchange. Yet, no one had come back ever since. They related how they felt used and thus appreciated the effort of the researcher to make sure that they indeed understood what their participation in the discussion truly meant.

Lastly, this study also respected the norms of the communities by going through the proper offices or channels, especially in the communities. A token was also given to those who participated in the barangay and NGO focus group discussions as a recognition of their contribution to the study. Meanwhile, the researcher offered to pay for the coffee of the government officials she interviewed outside of their offices.

Due to the extent and magnitude of the devastation brought about by Typhoon Haiyan to Tacloban City, several health and safety issues were likewise considered. As the super typhoon just happened six months ago, most families were still homeless or under very poor living conditions. Psychological stress was also rampant among the people.

As such, the research information sheet also indicated the local social welfare service in Tacloban as a provisional service if any participant might experience stress from sharing her experiences during the super typhoon. Otherwise, the researcher decided to briefly stop whenever sensitive information such as death of a family member was brought up in the discussion and wait for the participant to either tell more or change the topic of the conversation.

The researcher was also kindly advised by some barangay participants to go back to her accommodation in downtown while there was still daylight because of incidences of theft and other violent activities that may put the researcher at risk. The researcher initially felt confident moving around the city on her own since she was a local. However, she later realised that some people had now viewed her differently, especially when the barangay focus group participants remarked how brave she was for going alone and how she “looked like them [the foreigners] who go around town, in their backpacks, asking questions from the people.” As Narag and

Maxwell (2014) noted in their experience of doing qualitative research in the Philippines: “Researchers, for example, are usually viewed to come from the elite class: they are typically richer, more educated, and by their physical appearance, more Westernised than the participants of the research” (p. 313).

#### ***4.3.4 Data Collection Strategies: Interviews and focus group discussions***

This research employed two collection data strategies: one-on-one semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (see Appendix One for the schedule). The researcher interviewed the city vice mayor, a city councillor, and the consultant on urban and environmental planning. Meanwhile, the two NGOs and the two barangays were invited for four separate focus group discussions. These two different strategies were chosen for its practicality within the context of Tacloban after super typhoon Haiyan.

First, local government officials were doubly busy managing the post-disaster rehabilitation program of the city. Hence, finding a common time for a sit-down discussion with other city leaders or other members of the communities was impractical, if not impossible. Second, in the Philippines, which has a history of several centuries under colonial rule, there is a vertical social relationship that privileges one social class over the other and it permeates in every aspect of Philippine society (Narag & Maxwell, 2014). The presence of local government officials may hinder participation from other members in the group discussion, especially those from the communities. As such, separate interviews were used to collect data from the local government officials.

Moreover, Miller and Glassner (2004) argued that qualitative interviews make use of social differences, instead of denying it, by giving opportunities for individuals to articulate their feelings about their life experiences. This chance to reflect on and speak about one’s life is not often available, most especially for individuals who have been stereotyped and devalued in a larger society. Thus, interviews are a promising approach to collect and rigorously examine narratives about the social world.

This was true for the local government officials of Tacloban – particularly the elected ones, or the usual “politicians.” When asked to describe their experiences

during Super Typhoon Haiyan, the vice mayor and the city councillor first answered with a surprised yet mild interjection. The researcher perceived that the officials had expected a more critical question regarding the post-Haiyan efforts. There was a general atmosphere of cynicism in the city during that time, which was further amplified by researchers from the local and international media and academe.

Thus, to an extent, this interview approach was used by the researcher to build rapport with her interviewees. Considering the emotional climate of the city, it was very important to establish trust and familiarity with the interviewees so that they would feel comfortable enough to “talk back.” This is because “when respondents talk back, they provide insights into the narratives they use to describe the meanings of their social worlds” (Miller & Glassner, 2004, p.134).

On the other hand, focus groups were employed for NGOs and barangays as this method has always been favoured as a means of generating information on public perceptions and viewpoint (Lloyd-Evans, 2006). In a collective culture such as the Philippines, a phenomenon can be best understood by accessing group beliefs that will give insight into community relations, identities, and group feelings about a particular topic (Narag & Maxwell, 2014). Moreover, focus group discussions were a useful tool in exploring differences in the use of language and vernacular terms within the communities (Lloyd-Evans, 2006).

All interviews and focus group discussions were recorded. Additionally, the researcher took notes while talking with the participants to highlight significant points that came up during the conversations. She also recorded her general observations and feelings about and towards the place, the participants, and the entire data collection process in a separate journal in-between interview schedules or transcribing.

#### ***4.3.5 Data Analysis***

In qualitative research, the researcher as the central instrument in the research process is both its strength and weakness (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014). On one hand, the researcher’s identity, age, gender, class and race influence the way participants respond to questions. The processing of the ideas and narratives

collected can only be as analytical as the ability, discipline and creativity of the researcher in possessing new ways of seeing the world.

Miller and Glassner (2004) argued that researchers “need to be cautious of the ‘romantic’ impulse which identified ‘experience’ with ‘authenticity’” (p.138). They further suggested that it is possible to find realities within interviews that are ultimately contradictory to the accounts and stories given by the participants. To address this, this study used broad and open-ended questions that changed and developed over time. This is to “fill in a ‘jigsaw’ of differing accounts of ‘reality,’ unravelling which may be said to be generally ‘true’ and which are specific and subjective” (Mayoux, 2006, p. 118).

Then again, although there are ‘pollutants’ in the interviews and focus group discussions, this research chose to study what was actually said by the participants. Significantly, investigating what were articulated had given this study an indication of what topics make sense and nonsense, or what is relevant and otherwise to the participants (Miller & Glassner, 2004). It was based on their narratives that descriptions and themes from the data were developed and reported as results of this study (Creswell, 2014).

Moreover, this research recognised that, in comparison to other methods, focus groups can be particularly difficult to analyse. This is because the focus of the analyses is not the individual but the group (Lloyd-Evans, 2006). This study made sure that the statements made in a specific discussion was true to the various ‘voices’ represented in a given focus group.

First, participants were given category names and a corresponding number. Then, each interview and focus group discussions were transcribed by the researcher herself. Statements that were initially found useful were highlighted while transcribing. Thornberg and Charmaz (2012) noted how coding begins directly as the first data starts to emerge in the study. As a result, data collection and data coding go hand in hand throughout the research project.

Second, the researcher went through each transcribed interview and discussion again. This time, she paid closer attention to the texts – the statements along with its underlying meaning. Since the amount of data was not particularly

large, the researcher manually labelled the texts and plotted these against the key ideas of this research: (1) social capital (such as bonding/bridging/linking social capital, trust, reciprocity, and politics), (2) Facebook use, and (3) experiences during the Super Typhoon Haiyan.

The labelled texts were clustered together, resulting into themes. Once themes were identified, the researcher plotted these clusters against the data (Creswell, 2014) taking note of any agreements or contradictions within. These key ideas were divided into categories, after which appropriate and descriptive wordings were sought as sub-headings for the next two chapters. There, statements were assembled and further analysed.

It is important to note that transcribed statements by the respondents were directly quoted in and comprised the majority of the analysis. Following a linguistic social constructivist paradigm, this research argues that discourses produce concepts (Social constructivism, 2007). As such, the bases of interaction among people is clearly an important aspect of social life (Enriquez, 1986). To study the social interaction in the Philippine environment as codified in the language reveals a lot about its worldview and character.

Finally, Gerring (2007) emphasised that “a case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases” (p.20). The analysis employed in this case study is a function of the number of *comparable* observations available within a unit. From there, it sought to reconstruct realities by providing alternative explanations, examining the connections between the data and other relevant literature and attempting to describe an emerging theory (Creswell, 2014).

#### **4.3.6 Verification**

Stewart-Withers et al. (2014) suggested a criteria for judging rigour in qualitative research: *credibility*, which asks if the findings are believable; *transferability*, which asks if the findings are relevant to similar settings; *dependability*, which asks if the findings are likely to be relevant to a different time than the one in which it was conducted, and; *confirmability*, or the extent to which the researcher had not allowed personal values to intrude in the research process

to an excessive degree. It asks, 'could another researcher from a different background come to the same conclusions?'

To satisfy these, the researcher employed triangulation or use of multiple sources of data that were true from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant and even the readers of the account. She likewise provided a thick description of the setting and the participants, including negative or discrepant information that arose from analysing the data (Creswell, 2014).

Overall, these incongruences were expected and considered by the researcher when she investigated a typhoon-stricken and politically tensed society such as Tacloban City. She equally recognised that the entire thesis process was guided by her personal experience, existing knowledge, and epistemological background. Accordingly, these also influenced the presentation of results and analyses of data, which will be shown in the next three chapters.

## CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL CAPITAL OF TACLOBAN CITY AFTER SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN

*“Whenever anyone has a story to tell, they tell their barber.”*

*– Alan Alcantara, a barber from Guiuan, Samar<sup>5</sup>*

Disasters disrupt social order. Yet it is also during these times that social capital is most utilised and put to the test. This chapter describes how networks and resources were made available to people within Tacloban City after it was hit by Super Typhoon Haiyan, as expressed by its selected local leaders, residents and NGO workers during the interviews and focus group discussions. The aim of this chapter is to explore the choices available to the residents, identify the choices they made and the reasons behind them, and examine the consequences of their choices.

To identify the presence and level of social capital in Tacloban City, the three sub-components were used: *networks, norms, and trust* (Jung et al., 2013; Kwon et al., 2013). This study defined *networks* as the sphere of connections among individuals. *Norms* are shared values and expectations within the network. Lastly, *trust* is the reciprocity of norms within a network.

In describing the social networks in Tacloban City, this study referred to the respondent's ties to family and friends, then to the larger community through the NGOs, and the local government. As mentioned in the second chapter, these ties may be strong or weak, as characterised by high levels of emotional intensity and intimacy. *Bonding social capital* is synonymous to strong ties with similar demographic characteristics such as family members, close friends, neighbours and work colleagues (Abad, 2005). Meanwhile, *bridging social capital* refers to weaker ties and it “occurs when members of one group connect with other members of other groups to seek access or support” (Larsen et al., 2004, p.66). Finally, recognising the significance of vertical networks in Tacloban City, *linking social capital* describes the ties with people in positions of authority and influence, such as representatives of public institutions (Abad, 2005).

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<sup>5</sup> Alan was seen cutting the hair of his fellow survivors in his makeshift barbershop a few months after Super Typhoon Haiyan. (<http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/social-good-summit/2014/barber-guiuan-yolanda-haiyan>)



The examination of the trust embedded in these networks was heavily based on the values and expectations communicated by the respondents as distinguished by the researcher's knowledge of the Filipino social norms. For purposes of brevity, all of the quoted statements by the respondents are direct English translations from Filipino. However, the researcher endeavoured to remain true to the syntax of the statements to preserve the cultural and symbolic meanings that are vital in the presentation of this chapter.

## **5.1 Bonding Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan**

### ***5.1.1 The family: An extended resource supply***

Most respondents, when asked who they turned to for help during Super Typhoon Haiyan, replied with an attitude of self-reliance. This choice was however based on a circumstance wherein there was practically no one to ask help from during the time of crisis. This was reflected in their statements, which expressed their full awareness and acceptance of everyone's vulnerability during and after the super typhoon. However, it is notable that their reference to the "self" included their respective immediate families.

*"Just ourselves. All were already in panic. So, we just made do with what we had to survive during that time."* – Community resident #8, barangay councillor and father

*"There was no one to ask for help. It was very impossible because everyone was asking for help."* – NGO worker #8

*"Your family. During that time, you only had yourself to rely on. You could not get help from others. You had to stand on your own – there's no one to ask for help even the city government. I went to our office that time, there was no one there. Everyone left. So, it was just our family helping each other."* – NGO worker #4, ex-government employee

Meanwhile, for one city councillor, being self-reliant meant helping other members of the family, including that of his sister-in-law.

*"I did not seek help, instead I was the one who sought to help during that time. Since I was on the fourth floor of my residence, I was relatively safe. I only started seeking help when I heard of the casualties among the family of my sister-in-law. I was led to the police station where I could access the phone."* – City councillor, business owner

Clearly, the family was a major source of social capital in Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan. It acted as an extended supply of resources when one is left with nothing. Family members, including the children, were considered as additional and helpful assets.

*"Yes. It was my family. And my relatives there. We lost everything so we ran to them."* – Community resident #9, a mother and barangay councillor

*"Yes, because I do not have a husband anymore. I am a widow. So, it was my child and those two children I adopted. My children from Imelda Village brought me food. They came here for us. I have children there [in other village]."* – Community resident #1, mother and purok official

David (2001) noted that, in an impoverished and dependent economy such as the Philippines, the family assumes the responsibility of providing economic security when the outside society fails to do so. The family even "formulates strategies to guarantee the long term survival of the entire family, for the social goods are limited and are accessible only to those who have the capacity to pay" (p.120). This makes the family as the only valid network wherein one can demand expectations from.

*"So, you could not ask help from anyone except your relatives. It was just the two of us. There was no one to help us but ourselves – my husband and I. Yes, we have friends. Thankfully, there were friends."* – Community resident #10, mother and housewife

### **5.1.2 Friends and neighbours: The geographically proximate 'relative'**

Friends, neighbours, and close relatives acted as the next most important source of social capital for those who had lost their family members to Super Typhoon Haiyan. One respondent, whose brother and accommodation business were taken by the typhoon, expressed this position:

*"For me, it was my friends. My nephew needed to be brought to the hospital. I was looking for my brother that time. I was with them [friends]. There were so many dead there. They were doing that to the dead. They were looking at their faces and checking if they knew the body or not."* – Community resident # 12, ex-business owner

More significantly, it was the aspect of physical proximity that led the respondents to turn to or be sought by their neighbours as the most immediate and available network during the super typhoon.

*"This was because all of us, even some of our relatives, had evacuated to our house. Then, we panicked because our neighbours started to come to our place as well."* – NGO worker #8

*"At the downtown. We evacuated the night before the typhoon. My family and I evacuated then we brought our neighbours along. They told us, 'wherever you go, we will go with you.' Then our neighbours, they were three families, they all went together. Three families. I asked them to come with us because they were asking me. They knew I used to work for the city government, so I was the one telling them that they should not take the coming typhoon lightly. So they said, 'wherever you'll go, we'll also go there.'"* – NGO worker #4, ex-government employee

However, examining subsequent statements of other respondents, geographical proximity alone was not a sufficient motivation to seek help from their neighbours. When asked why she chose a particular neighbour to run to for help, one respondent answered:

*"They were the only ones I am [relationally] close with ever since. [After Haiyan], we stayed with them for three months."* – Community resident #10, mother and housewife

Even with an established relational closeness, a sense of reluctance to seek help from neighbours was observed. The same respondent instead pointed to the risky physical condition of her daughter and the nature of her relationship with a nearby neighbour (who is also her god-brother) in finally identifying her decision to reach out at a time of prevalent vulnerability.

*"During that time, my six-year old daughter was not feeling well. So, I did not have any choice. I went to my god-brother [who lives across the street] to seek help and refuge."* – Community resident #10, mother and housewife

This hesitation was also observed in an NGO worker who, despite having a good understanding of the intensity of the super typhoon, dismissed the idea of seeking shelter from comparatively sturdier apartments across their street. It was only until her house was totally destroyed that she sought help from her neighbours. Her statements indicated relational remoteness despite living nearby them.

*"While it was still only the winds, we snuggled into one corner of the house where there was concrete floor. Until our house came down. Good thing we were able to still come out. There were actually apartments where we can seek shelter in. At least we were allowed to get in. But once we were there, their roof was also blown by the wind. At one point, even the owners themselves were already wet inside their own apartment. Nevertheless, after the typhoon, we stayed there. I think for around one week."*– NGO worker #10, Tacloban-born university graduate

Hence, two things defined the bonding social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan: *relational* and *geographical proximity*. These values provided both immediate physical and emotional support that served as a lifeline during the disaster. Still, as Larsen et al. (2004) noted, while communities with low to moderate income possess high levels of bonding social capital, their social assets are constantly challenged because of their limited physical resources. This is true in the case of Tacloban City after the typhoon.

*"Yes. [Relatives are] number one. There were some who supported me. However, the help was limited. Because he also has his own family."*  
Community resident #10, mother and housewife

This made it difficult for Tacloban City to convert their bonding social capital into a more politically important bridging social capital which could have resulted in greater collective action after the super typhoon (Leonard & Onyx, 2004). This was expressed by another NGO worker who described the challenges of trusting and seeking help from close networks in an atmosphere of insecurity due to depleting food, water, and other basic resources. Undeniably, external networks affect social relations within and outside the family and neighbourhood (Larsen et al., 2004).

*"This was because, in the minds of some people, you have like some groceries there, it was like, and there was no sharing anymore. They were probably thinking of their own welfare too; they might run out of groceries as well. They were told: 'You couldn't buy anything from Tacloban anymore since most goods were already stolen.' Something like that. Then, our friend from Dulag who had like a big grocery store, decided not to open it anymore because there were rumours that looting had already reached their place. So, the tendency is to go to Sugod, Baybay. So, if you go to Sugod, there was hoarding. If you go to Baybay, there was hoarding as well. So what we did, we went to Cebu just to get our groceries. We made sure there was enough for a month."*  
– NGO worker #7, mother

## 5.2 Bridging Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan

### 5.2.1 *The opportunistic others*

There were very few statements culled from interviews and focus group discussions which suggested that the respondents sought help from individuals, communities, or organisations other than their families and neighbours. This is an indication of low bridging social capital in Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan. There was, however, an acknowledgement from the respondents with regards to help extended by the outsiders.

*“The NGOs. It was really the NGOs. The foreign NGOs. If it weren’t for them. They were the ones who first responded to us. They gave food, help, shelter, medicine. One week after Yolanda [Haiyan].”* – Community resident #3, mother, small business owner and purok secretary

In his review of a national survey on social relations, Abad (2005) clarified the common perceptions regarding Filipinos as not highly trusting of other people. While the survey revealed that Filipinos trust only a few people lest others would take advantage of them, it also indicated that they believe that others want what is good for themselves. For a people of indirect communication such as the Filipinos (Narag & Maxwell, 2014), a closer examination of the overall correspondence would reveal that the respondents from Tacloban were actually looking for help even though the psychological impact of the disaster caused them to be unclear of their needs and expectations.

*“Actually, we were looking for like where we could, what, for food, water.”* – Community resident #10, mother and housewife

*“Outcast.”* – Community resident #8, barangay councillor

*“We were like zombies.”* – Community resident #12, ex-business owner

*“We were completely destitute that time, but your hunger, it seemed that you didn’t feel any hunger. You will not notice it. We were like zombies walking.”* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

*“It was like you were completely blank.”* – Community resident #3, purok secretary, small business owner and housewife

Citing the sociological theory of Sztompka, Abad (2005) maintained that 'distrust' and 'mistrust' are two different concepts. The former implies negative expectations about the actions of others which manifests in avoidance, escape, or distancing oneself. The latter refers to a "neutral position when both trust and distrust are suspended" (p.44). This results in unclear expectations and hesitations about committing oneself. For the respondents, these uncertainties were further heightened by unmet expectations, such as unfulfilled promises and rampant ransacking.

*"You know, there had been so many people who interviewed me. There was one who told me, I don't know what country she is from. She looks like from Spain. A foreigner. But she also looks like someone from the Middle East. She asked me how much money I need to be able to completely rebuild my house. She told me not to worry, just tell her the amount. I told her we do not have CR (comfort room, or the toilet). We still do not have walls for the CR. But that's the truth. Then she wrote 50,000 [pesos] in a paper. She said, 'Do not worry. The money is already here. There is already a budget for this. Tell me how much do you need.' Until now, I haven't heard from her. It has been several interviews, yet for nothing."* – Community resident #10, mother and housewife

*"Then you will see, you will never have imagined that this would even happen. Then there's this one freak who said there is a tsunami. There was someone from here, there was someone who said [it]. Yet the purpose was to loot."* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

*"It [the news about tsunami] just spread around like that."* – Community resident #4, fisherman and father

The looting particularly highlighted how resources and properties are deeply embedded in social networks such that property does not just refer to any tangible or material possession. Instead, it is a type of social relationship where there is a shared understanding or expectation about what can or cannot be done with the resources with respect to the members of a community (Dynes, 2005). During emergencies, there is a very powerful social pressure to temporarily suspend the use of goods for personal use while the needs of the affected community still exist or what Leonard and Onyx (2004) call as "norms of distributive justice" (p.104). The negative emotions expressed by the respondents, predominantly their frustration over their inability to access aid during disaster, may suggest perceived failed expectations from privileged others to make their resources available; hence, the occurrence of widespread lootings (Dussaillant & Guzman, 2014).

### 5.2.2 The privileged outsiders

Meanwhile, a unique manifestation of bridging social capital in Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan was displayed by those who were not originally from the city but were there during the disaster. The city consultant on urban and environmental planning had been living in Tacloban City for only three months when the super typhoon came. He narrated how he and his housemates, who are also migrants, drew strength from each other.

*“Then I told my housemates, ‘We will survive this.’ Although I myself was already thinking of how we will be able to survive. Then, I tried to calm them down because they were all crying. ‘We can do this ah.’ I am mustering up all the courage that I had. So, the non-Taclobanons, we really had a strong fellowship because we were all not from here. We needed to support and draw strength from each other.” – Tacloban city consultant for urban and environmental planning*

Lin (2001) argued that resources embedded in social networks enhance the outcome of one’s actions because social relations reinforce one’s worthiness as an individual. Social capital does not only provide emotional support but also public acknowledgement of one’s claim to certain resources. The city consultant positioned himself as an outsider with ‘connections’ (specifically to a big commercial television network where he used to work) to provide resilience to his immediate community after Super Typhoon Haiyan.

*“All of my housemates, whether they were male or female, they kept on crying because they felt they needed to tell their parents that they were safe. So I told them I will go back to GMA 7 so I could relay to them that I was safe and I also had to look for my brod [fraternity brother]. I know that the media is such a big help in relaying the message. I just knew that everyone was so down at that time. And I was used to situations like that, I know there’s always an emergency IT broadcast.” – Tacloban city consultant for urban and environmental planning*

However, the city consultant failed to get help from his connections in the said television network. His former colleagues, who were actually physically present in Tacloban for news coverage on the disaster, were very busy. Alternatively, he turned to his girlfriend and another close friend who were both working in the same television network and were based in Manila during the disaster.

*“Actually, I saw them but they were also mobile. They needed to go to other areas. I couldn’t disturb them so I went to the city hall just in case there are other media organisations. Then I saw the IT setup of the DSWD. I sent a Facebook message to my girlfriend working for GMA7 and Sweenie, both media people and Manila-based. I know they’re both efficient. When I have my senior moments, when I forgot to book my tickets, those things, they were my lifeline.” – Tacloban city consultant for urban and environmental planning*

Leonard and Onyx (2004) noted how bridging social capital, which is built on weak ties, requires an exploration of norms to ascertain if they are sufficiently similar with the purposes of those who are involved in the network. Since the social distance is wider, there is a greater likelihood of clash of norms. Thus, the terms of reciprocity need to be more obvious, more immediate and more explicit than for bonding social capital. These requisites are difficult to obtain in the face of disasters.

The experience of the city consultant and the expressed frustration of other respondents revealed that the low bridging social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan was characterised by a loose sense of geographical proximity due to the absence of relational proximity. This hindered the access to a more instrumental form of social capital. However, this does not only mean that communities are disconnected; instead, communities are products of a complex set of power-laden relationships where connections are controlled by those who have the resources (DeFilippis, 2001). This conceptualisation becomes more evident with the respondents’ relationship to institutions, particularly the government.

### **5.3 Linking social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan**

#### ***5.3.1 Local and national government: The non-existent State***

There was a strong general feeling of disappointment and discontent over the performance of the government in responding to the super typhoon. Of all the types of social capital, this network elicited the most number of comments from the respondents. These deep-seated statements reveal that the respondents had high expectations on the government’s intervention to assist them during calamities.

*“Nothing. No one even bothered to make themselves felt here. – Community resident #7, father*



*"Nothing. It was a man after his own self. Everyone has a strategy of their own here."* – Community resident #2, housewife and small business owner

*"There was no government here."* – Community resident #12, ex-business owner

*"There was no order."* – Community resident #8, barangay councillor

*"There was no government. Even with the relief, there was none. I don't know. At first, we were angry but now that we had gone down to the communities, we saw the houses, those who were able to survive. You live on your own, really. There was no such thing as the government or protection. Nothing. With all the work that had to be done, with all the worries, then you have to think of your own life. There was really no concept of bureaucracy. It was wild. Anarchy, anarchy. You must have known it, that the DND [Department of National Defense], OCD [Office of the Civil Defense], even they were helpless."* – Tacloban city consultant for urban and environmental planning

Nevertheless, the respondents were also quick to justify the inaction of their local government officials. They view the people in the government as a distant yet powerful entity, who they can only speculate to be vulnerable just like them. There was an overall perceived high relational and geographical distance between the people and the government. As such, the linking social capital of Tacloban City was not fully accessed.

*"It is awkward and embarrassing [to go to the government for help]."* – Community resident # 7, father

*"I did not think about it. Maybe the mayor is busy."* – Community resident #8, barangay councillor

*"Yes. Because everyone's busy too. It was like during that time, there was none, plus it was very different for every person, they were also affected. Of course, they were also busy."* – Community resident #7, father

*"No, none. We didn't, because the mayor himself was also a victim. Our higher government officials were also victims."* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

However, contrary to what the people felt, the city vice mayor of Tacloban claimed that there was much aid. He described that city administration was simply overwhelmed with all the massive attention and assistance that came in all at once after the super typhoon. The city consultant attributed this to the unexpected intensity and devastation of the disaster.

*"There's some department heads there and some employees here. But then, what I did was that: 'No, no, we need somebody to sit there [at the reception] so that as soon as the people enter, [we would know] what they need, and then how to guide them. Because everyone just came, the foreign news media were coming, all of the news organizations were coming, and no one was directing them. You cannot do that. So you have to have somebody sitting there, telling them, so all the efforts ---For the first few days, yes. Just coordinate them. People wanted to help eh. There were heaps of help. People wanting to help but do not know where to start. So you have to channel them where to go.'" – Tacloban City vice mayor*

*"Because we're also overwhelmed. To tell you honestly, well, the quote of one congressman was very appropriate: 'How can you prepare in this type of disaster if you yourself was not prepared to see a ship in the middle of the road?'" – Tacloban city consultant for urban and environmental planning*

Yet this could be reflective of the existing social and political order (and disorder) of Tacloban City and the national government even before Super Typhoon Haiyan. The 'weak state,' which is characterised by bloated bureaucracy, was overpowered by the enormous interest and capacity-building it had been receiving. As a result, its presence was not felt by the people.

Indeed, the city consultant was contracted by the city administrator who, along with the city mayor, all belong to the same college fraternity. As the consultant for Urban and Environmental Planning, he was supposed to be in a different division but had been working under the office of his 'brod,'<sup>6</sup> which had gotten him into wide-ranging functions beyond his scope such as human organisational planning, solid waste management planning, tourism, and even media or public relations affairs. After the super typhoon, his role "became even more confusing" as he presently acts as the secretariat of the Tacloban Recovery and Sustainable Development Group (TRSDG), which is the multi-sectoral team led by the Tacloban City Hall and UN Habitat with other members from different state departments, line agencies, and some representation from international organizations and civil societies. He thus further noted other conflicting practices on the ground:

*"Well, that was what seemed to be the findings, that the OPAR [Office of the Presidential Assistance for Rehabilitation] is not fully capacitated. We are not familiar with the humanitarian approach as being abided by the other agencies. As long as the OPAR has an order, the OPAR will*

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<sup>6</sup> A slang term for 'brother' typically used in fraternities in the Philippines.

*just abide by it, even the other agencies were confused. So what is the rationale for forming the OPAR? Should it be the NEDA [National Economic Development Authority] that will take over? But of course, we have political dynamics.”*

*“There was no representation of LGU in the cluster meetings. There were just so many things that they were doing. Workshop fatigue. These were all the same faces. But there should be workshops as part of dissertation. But sometimes, these overlap. Even the OCHA has shortcomings in coordination. The workshops were duplicated. Then again, how crucial is this workshop to be given time by this over-fatigued barangay leaders and city municipal?”*

### **5.3.2 Local NGOs: The extended State**

One notable illustration of linking social capital in Tacloban was the presence of local NGOs that now hold office in the city after the Super Typhoon Haiyan. Due to the unfelt presence of the local government, a third party agency was needed to link the people to state services. CFSI, in particular, identifies the lapses in and thus monitors the progress of services given to the communities.

*“We go to the field. We hold focus group discussions or key informal interviews with the barangay officials, then the community, then we refer it to the concerned agencies nearby.” – NGO worker #6*

*“Basically we monitor protection issues, access to services, and the like. Violation of human rights. Incidences of abuse, such that whenever there were attempted rape cases. We refer it immediately.” – NGO worker #8*

Meanwhile, Operation Blessing - Visayas was “started for Haiyan,” as its field supervisor claimed. The super typhoon had given the locals new roles, particularly those who respond to disasters. Due to the intensity of the disaster, long-term projects particularly aimed at communities that receive less attention compared to Tacloban City had been launched. Remarkably, it was also through connections within Tacloban that this NGO was formed.

*“So, it was our first time to have infrastructure [projects], almost everything, there were so many first times. We mobilised through connections. So, we formed the group, because we need this, for rehabilitation, we need to position ourselves where it is more strategic. Because if we still get people from Manila, it will be more difficult. So we want to employ locals because we want to help them. It was just really ‘connect-connect’.” – NGO worker #5, field supervisor*

### ***5.3.3 Local and national government: The divided State***

Possibly, what most betrayed the respondents' general expectation from the State was the uncalled for political rift between the national and the local government. This theme surprisingly and inevitably came up during interviews and focus group discussions despite the relatively 'neutral' topic of the use of Facebook in accessing help during the super typhoon. It is likewise noteworthy how the shortcomings of the national government was strongly felt in the smallest political unit. This only emphasises that, in a society run by elites, "the local is national and the national is local" (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005).

*"There was no help from the national government."* – Community resident #9, mother and barangay councillor

*"Maybe the [national] government was not ready."* – Community resident #8, barangay councillor and father

*"We do not know what happened to them."* – Community resident #10, mother and housewife

*"At that time, if we ask help now, the feud between the national government and then the local government, was like, the political feud had a big impact."* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

*"It's like the coordination between the local and the national government. It should be – well, for the strengthening, for the post-disaster context, strengthening how the efforts from the national would trickle down to local like how their interventions could meet halfway. Maybe it was because the political landscape of Tacloban was different because it has a conflict with the national."* – Tacloban city consultant for urban and environmental planning

This tension had indeed trickled down to the barangays. A barangay official expressed helplessness and frustration when he dealt with the state department on social welfare after the Super Typhoon Haiyan. Notably, this barangay councillor campaigned under the current city mayor, whose family is the incumbent president's political rival.

*"If you want to help, you should not ask for something from them. Because, [if you use your] common sense, everything was destroyed. How can you ask one barangay official if he has a truck to load the relief goods? Imagine, 1,227 households were under me. Where can I get the truck?"* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

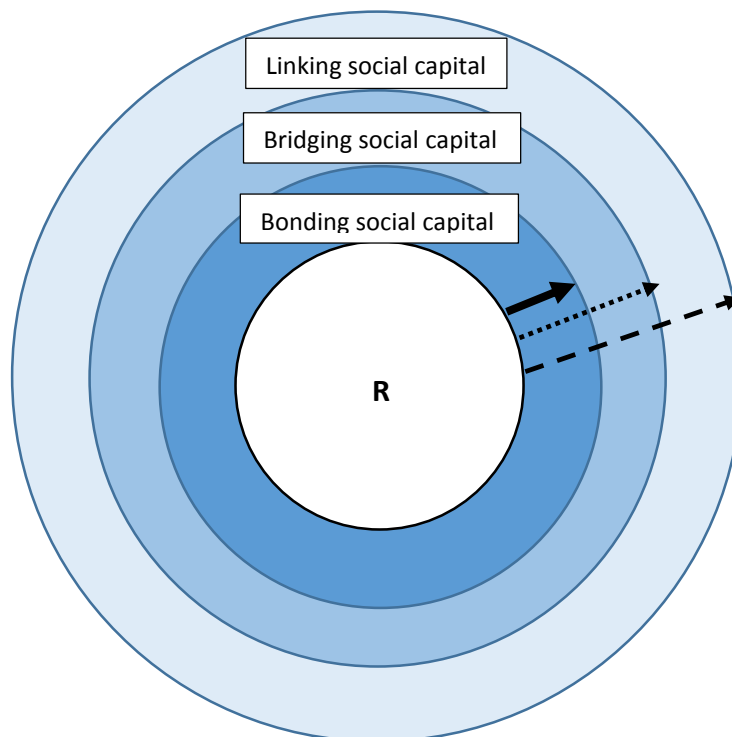
This overall perceived confusion and disappointment further deepened a recurring culture of distrust between the State and society, which diminishes the ability of the former to provide basic services to the latter (Brower & Magno, 2011). In an almost circular fashion, this political rift appeared to be a major factor in the common decision of most respondents to instead seek support from their families and close relatives. Otherwise, as they contended, they will not survive.

*“Oh, you will die of hunger. We didn’t expect anymore.”* – Community resident #1, mother and purok official

*“It didn’t cross our mind to, what, [rely on] the government in order for you to survive.”* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

#### 5.4 Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan: An Overview

As an overview, the social capital of Tacloban City in the face of Super Typhoon Haiyan can be seen as below:



**Figure 1. Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan**

The ‘R’ stands for the respondent, whose sphere of resources was limited as suggested by its small circle. It has a neutral colour, indicating that its capacities were dependent and embedded on its social connections during the disaster. The

respondent was also the point of reference in determining the access to resources and the intensity of networks in Tacloban City after the super typhoon.

The second circle represents the bonding social capital, which was the most geographically proximate network during the disaster. It has the darkest shade, demonstrating that there was a strong relational connection between the respondent and the members that comprise this network. Moreover, its size indicates the amount of resources it can and had generated during the disaster. The solid thick arrow from the respondents suggests that this social capital was fully accessed and utilised.

The third circle represents the bridging social capital, which depicted the respondents' average sense of geographical proximity with the outsiders. It has a lighter shade compared to bonding social capital as there was a felt relational distance resulting in reluctance to seek help from selected neighbours. This could have provided the respondents with bigger resources as indicated by a larger size of the circle in the diagram. The slightly broken arrow from the respondents suggests that this social capital was partially accessed and utilised.

Lastly, the outermost circle represents the linking social capital. This shows that the government, which was the expected source of linking social capital during the disaster, was the physically farthest network among others. It has the lightest shade which depicts the least trust exhibited after the super typhoon. The linking social capital contained the largest resources. Unfortunately, as the broken and thin arrow suggests, this was not accessed and utilised by the respondents for survival and resilience.

***Table 1. Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan indicating the presence of relational and geographical proximity of networks***

<b><i>Type of Social Capital</i></b>	<b><i>Relational Proximity</i></b>	<b><i>Geographical Proximity</i></b>
<b><i>Bonding Social Capital</i></b> (family members, neighbours and friends)	Yes	Yes
<b><i>Bridging Social Capital</i></b> (NGOs and members of other barangays)	No	Yes
<b><i>Linking Social Capital</i></b> (local government)	No	No

As the table above illustrates, this study highlighted the importance of geography and social relationships in shaping the social capital of the city after a disaster. Still, this study also recognised that one defining characteristic of Tacloban City in the face of Super Typhoon Haiyan was the prevalent use of social media, particularly Facebook. Hence, the next chapter will discuss how this technology further influenced the dynamics and development of the city's social capital amidst disaster.

## CHAPTER 6: FACEBOOK USE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL OF TACLOBAN CITY AFTER SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN

*"Dear President Aquino, I am a Filipino. I am a Taclobanon. My family name is not Romualdez though. What do you have against me too that you refuse to sincerely help my city? #DearMrPresident"*

*– Facebook post one year after Typhoon Haiyan<sup>7</sup>*

Social capital is a useful framework for elucidating the value of our social networks and recently, the value of socio-technical tools, such as Facebook, that enable people to maintain these connections. As a mediated form of communication, Facebook has been suggested as a method of enhancing the social capital of a locality beyond the boundaries of time and space (Kwon et al., 2013; Ellison et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2014; McWilliam, 2013; Dabner, 2012). However, the extent to which it can influence the avenues for requesting aid and preferences of disaster survivors in view of complex socio-political realities has not been fully examined.

This chapter describes the extent to which Facebook utilised and strengthened the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan. As presented in the previous chapter, there was a presence of rich bonding social capital yet weak bridging and linking social capitals in the disaster-stricken city. The examined capitals were used as benchmarks in identifying any new development in the formation of social capital with the inclusion of Facebook use.

To analyse the above concepts, the researcher used the top five functional blocks of Facebook as identified by Kietzmann et al. (2011). These are *relationships, conversations, presence, identity, and reputation*. These functional blocks were used as complementary themes to the three foundational components of social capital (networks, norms, and trust).

*Relationships* is the extent to which users have some form of association that leads them to converse or share media in an online platform. Consequently, connections between users of a social media platform often determine the what-

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<sup>7</sup> A conversation with a struggling tricycle driver pushed a Taclobanon to take to social media her frustration at the politics that she believes has hampered aid to Tacloban City. (<http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/71953-aquino-tacloban-typhoon-yolanda>)



and-how of information and resource exchange. Moreover, as Boyd and Ellison (2008) suggested, Facebook relationships can represent and function as either strong or weak ties. Hence, this functional block described the *bonding, bridging, and linking social capitals*.

To further study the norms and expectations in a social media setting, the functional blocks of *conversations, presence, and identity* were used. According to Keitzmann et al. (2011), the block *conversations* refers to the extent to which users communicate with other users in a social media setting and the various reasons that motivate them to do so. *Presence* represents the extent to which users can determine whether other users are accessible. It includes knowing where others are (physically, relationally and virtually) and whether they are available. *Identity* refers to the extent to which users reveal their identities and portray themselves in a social media setting. As a general rule, social media communities that do not value identity highly, hold relationships to a similar value.

Finally, to determine the levels of trust on Facebook, the functional block *reputation* was utilised. *Reputation* outlines the extent to which users can identify the standing of others, including themselves, in a social media setting. As Kietzmann et al. (2011) noted, this is primarily based on trust even in an online environment.

As with the previous chapter, the statements of the respondents were comprehensively employed in examining the social phenomena of Facebook in utilising and strengthening the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan. Again, all quoted statements of the respondents are direct English translations by the researcher.

### **6.1 Facebook relationships of selected residents of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan: '*Personal is online, online is personal*'**

One outstanding characteristic of relationships on Facebook, as described by the respondents, is the strong association between the personal and the online, such that the personal is acknowledged online and the online supplements the personal (Ellison et al., 2007). Although many were not regular users of said social media platform, the respondents acknowledged the potential of Facebook to link them

with their families and friends who were outside Tacloban City. They recognised their loved ones' presence in social media as though the latter were physically nearby, only waiting for them to 'check in.'

*"What I understood is this: Facebook is a form of communication for those outside and in other places. Of course, you have friends. I am not a user, but if you have friends and they were asking how you are and what happened. Because this was nationwide. So to calm them, they will have a peace of mind if they know that their relatives and friends are okay."* - Community resident #10, housewife and mother

Indeed, most of them deliberately used Facebook to communicate with their strong ties outside Tacloban. While some reported contacting those who were in other parts of the Philippines, the majority of the correspondence was directed towards those who were located in other countries. Nevertheless, the choice of who to connect with on Facebook after the Super Typhoon was based on the respondents' physical immediate social network.

*"It [Facebook] was just for our family members who are in other countries."* - Community resident #7, father

*"There were many of us there who were communicating with those in other countries. If you have a relative abroad, you will queue there so you can contact them."* - Community resident #4, fisherman and father

*"Asking for help. Giving out news. Friends. Peers. My schoolmates, elementary and high school."* - Community resident #12, ex-business owner

Distance plays a significant factor why respondents would use and not use Facebook. For those whose family and relatives were nearby, cell phone remained to be a preferred tool for communication. For one respondent, being with her loved ones was still the best option.

*"My relatives were far away. It would be better if we say to them, 'Hello, nothing happened to us. No one died. There are still among us here who are alive.'"* - Community resident #4, fisherman and father

*"Just cell phone. Make calls. We just stayed in Palo [nearby town]. Then we went home to Samar [nearby province]. My child didn't have food already."* - Community resident #11, mother

This implies that respondents ideally prefer to be physically present with families and relatives in the face of disasters. However, in a less-than-ideal context, when the desired means of communication such as face-to-face or cell phone communication were unavailable, Facebook was a very helpful alternative to connect with existing strong networks. Moreover, the ease of access and availability of Facebook immediately after Super Typhoon Haiyan made it the more logical option for the respondents.

The earliest period in which a respondent was able to access Facebook was the day after the super typhoon; the latest was two months after. Although some used their smart phones (mobile phones with Internet capability), most of the respondents were able to open their Facebook accounts through the emergency internet equipment of the Department of Social and Welfare (DSWD), which was positioned at the City Hall. Each person was allowed a maximum of three minutes to access the social media account. Interestingly, Facebook was the default and only website available in the said set-up.

*"Most cell phones were washed out or broken because it got wet from the rains. Just like what happened to us. Which is why we used Facebook." – Community resident #10, mother and housewife*

*"Yeah, I lost it. My contacts were in my old cell phone that was washed out." – Community resident #7, father*

*"There was no [cell phone] signal." – NGO worker #8*

*"It is free. There was no available 'load' or credits since stores were closed. This is the most cost-efficient way to reach families and loved ones after the typhoon. There were phone charging sites and free Wi-Fi at the city hall – that was where most people went to exchange information and seek help." – City councillor and businessman*

*"Facebook was made available first. Yes. On Saturday, I was already able to use Facebook and send. On the following night, I was able to send another update." – Tacloban City vice mayor*

*"Then those who were abroad. If you use cell phone, you need to have a pretty huge credit so that you can call internationally." – Community resident #9, mother and barangay councillor*

When the respondents were asked if they considered communicating with other networks aside from their families and relatives, particularly the government, the responses from barangays were divided. While some took it in levity, others

indicated their intention to know more about their leaders. For most of them, however, becoming friends with people in 'high position' was just inconceivable.

*"I will probably add [them as Facebook friends]. There's nothing really wrong about it. It's also one way of adding more friends on Facebook."*  
– Community resident #7, father

*"Oh yes. So that we could know what is on their accounts."* – Community resident #10, housewife and mother

*"The only problem is that, when you check the Facebook of Mayor or other [government officials], we are not friends. You have to be accepted as friend first. High position, we're poor. They're up there. High profile official."* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

*"Of course [not], oh my God! Would you expect us to be friends with Mayor? Of course [not], he's a high-ranking official."* – Community resident #3, mother and purok secretary

Again, the conflicting political climate of the disaster-stricken city appeared in the statements of the respondents, who expressed that it made a huge impact on their decision to seek help from government officials on Facebook. Indeed, the increasing political tension between the national and the local government bred suspicion among the members of the local government, which trickled down to the general populace. These weak institutional relationships inhibited the city from enhancing its social relations despite the utility of Facebook.

*"We're scared."* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

*"We're shy. We think it's inappropriate."* – Community resident #3, mother and purok secretary

*"Also, it seems that their, what [Facebook], is confidential. We are just ordinary constituents."* – Community resident #1, mother and purok official

*"None. There was not even a single communication or anything. If you're talking about relief, it took days before we received any, how much more if you expect us to communicate with them."* – Community resident #10, mother and housewife

*"I don't approve FB requests of those from the other political party. I don't have anything to do with them and that they might 'spy' on my Facebook account, so to speak. Look at these posts shared on my public page [on Facebook, which was set-up for the 2013 national elections], and see how they badly portrayed the present national administration (to which he is politically affiliated to). These matter because 'what you see is what you get.' Your Facebook page is a reflection, an extension of who you are."* – City councillor and businessman

The relationships of respondents on Facebook thus maintains, if not emphasises, the existing socio-political realities of Tacloban City before and after Super Typhoon Haiyan. Respondents still chose to connect with people whom they had personal connections. Consequently, the quality of these relationships (Szreter, 2000) also determined the extent to which Facebook facilitated the flow of resources embedded in these networks at a crucial time such as after a natural disaster.

## **6.2 Facebook conversations and presence of selected residents of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan: *'We're safe and we need help'***

The main reason respondents used Facebook was to inform their families and friends that they were alive and safe. This was the top recurring theme that surfaced in the interviews and focus group discussions. A good number of them even provided information about the condition of Tacloban City.

*"We contacted our relatives abroad through Facebook. And those in other places as well. We informed them of our condition here so they will not worry. Just so they would not worry. And be calm instead. We're all okay."* – Community resident #8, barangay councillor and father

*"Because if there is no communication, nothing. They could not do anything. They just cry and cry."* – Community resident #2, housewife and small business owner

As noted in the literature, information-seeking behaviours most positively contribute to bonding social capital (Kwon et al., 2013; Ellison et al., 2011). The need to send information was deemed vital in providing emotional support after the disaster – not just for the survivors but for their family and friends who were not in Tacloban. It was likewise remarkable how those outside of Tacloban turned to Facebook for seeking information about their loved ones, convinced that they can get feedback from the social media platform.

*"My sibling had been crying and crying. But when they learned, through Facebook, that we are all alive, that's the time they felt relieved. That's why Facebook was a huge help."* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

*"It was on Facebook that I learned that many were already worried."* – Community resident #2, housewife and small business owner

*"When I logged in to my Facebook, there were already a lot of messages." – NGO worker #2*

Hawkins and Maurer (2010) suggested that people display a connection to their place of residence that transcends mere geography and represents a peace of mind that is centred within the people and communities. While literature usually refers to "place" in a physical sense, neighbourhoods and communities as physical locations are becoming less geographically bound. In her ethnographic study of social relations in New Zealand, Stephens (2007) discovered that despite using neighbourhoods or local communities to structure the study, the primary day-to-day enactment of social capital observed amongst participants (e.g., connections, associations) were located across several different fields of practice such as family, schooling, work, and recreational activities beyond the neighbourhood.

From this perspective, place is both the material and social site for the development of social capital – anchoring a sense of self and one's relationships through memory and the meanings invested in that site through repeated interactions (Cox & Perry, 2011). In this case study, Facebook has become one such site. As posited earlier, it has become very much part of one's social presence that the respondents asked their families or friends to post on Facebook on their behalf.

*"My family were brought to Cebu. So my wife was the one who posted our pictures and re-posted them in my network. Just to post the pictures that we took because the people need to know the situation here in Tacloban." – Tacloban City vice mayor*

*"So I emailed my friend from Manila, using the email add of NBC news. My friend was the one who posted on Facebook for me to inform my friends on Facebook that I am still alive and that I emailed. When I was able to finally access Facebook, there were so many messages and Wall posts asking if I am still alive and all." – NGO worker #10*

*"I already had cell phone signal three days after the typhoon. That's when I learned from my son, who was in Manila, that there had been so much posts on my Facebook page already. My son told me that a lot were asking how I was and some were seeking help and assistance as well." – City councillor and businessman*

Significantly, most were able to get physical and financial help from their families and relatives through Facebook. One respondent attributed the cash she received from her niece, who was based in Brunei, to her neighbour's Facebook use.

Bonding social capital, although physically dispersed, was successfully accessed by the respondents. The online nature of Facebook extended the geography of Tacloban City.

*“Actually, it was not me [who accessed Facebook]. It was the family I sought shelter in. Because they are friends with my niece. According to them, they walked, I think that was three days after, to the city hall. That’s where they were able to use the internet. That’s where they were able to chat. Because they informed their mother who was abroad. So at the same time, they also thought of me. When they came back, they said that my niece was asking about me. Then after one or two weeks, my brother from Talalora (a nearby town) came and gave me cash. He said our niece from Brunei sent P4,000. There, we divided it amongst me and my siblings.”* – Community resident #10, housewife and mother

*“From the nieces and nephews of my mama. In another country. They sent help. One month after the typhoon.”* – Community resident #7, father

*“Because my siblings from outside [the country], when they learned what happened, that’s when they started to send help. They contributed just to send something here. They sent money to our relatives from Manila, Cebu. Then these relatives were the ones who sent food and clothes to us. That’s what arrived here. That was such a huge help to us because there was nothing to buy that time.”* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

*“The thing is that, later on, I got to check it. People just mobilised themselves, especially my family. One of them, my cousin in Singapore, friends in other parts of the country. They just mobilised themselves to help us and to send relief goods to us.”* – Tacloban City vice mayor

More importantly, respondents highlighted the importance of social relationships in determining the response time of those they sought for help. Other statements suggest that the respondents perceive aid as more than just helping. Personal interests, personal relationships, and emotions were very influential to cause people to act in desperate times.

*“Of course. They were very worried. So they sent help immediately.”* – Community resident #3, mother and purok secretary

*“Also, we have our [Facebook] page for the Cruz<sup>8</sup> clan, were I posted an update. Yes. They responded. From America, they sent money to Mindanao [one of the Philippines’ main islands]. Then they used that to buy what they sent to us here. It was a good thing that some of them*

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<sup>8</sup> Not real family name

*were online. So I was able to go on chat with them to tell them what we specifically need.” – NGO worker #8*

Jung et al. (2013) argued that the number of actual Facebook friends or the signals of relational investment do not have anything to do with receiving more favourable responses from their Facebook network, although the frequency of asking for help does generate higher responses from one’s Facebook network. This supports the two-fold goal expressed by the respondents in both informing and seeking help from their networks. Facebook was the most suitable tool in achieving these dual objectives.

*“The most important thing really is to inform that we are okay. At least, we’re alive. So that’s really the purpose. Then next to that, honestly, financial assistance from them.” – NGO worker #7*

*“Because I want my relatives to know that, I mean, despite of what happened, we all survived. And also others, my friends, because Facebook is worldwide. I want them to see the extent of the damages so that they will perceive the need to extend help to us. Because we really, really need help. That is why I uploaded all the photos.” – NGO worker #8*

*“It was easier on Facebook. Just post, for example, pictures or messages or something similar, just one click and all your friends will see it. Plus, the friends of your friends will see it as well. So it’s easier compared to text messages, which you have to do individually.” – Community resident #8, barangay councillor and father*

*“I don’t know, it’s probably popular. Rather than sending individual emails. At least on Facebook, you’ll just post one shout out, and it’s automatic. All your friends can read it. That’s where I post because that’s where most people often log in compared to emails. Then you can even monitor if the message you sent was ‘seen.’” – Tacloban city consultant for urban and environmental planning*

The respondents recognised that the public element of a social media platform allows unintended recipients to view their messages as well. The most convenient option of sending out an emergency message on Facebook is also the most publicly accessed and shared. Still, these features of social media as a free, open, and mainstream platform encouraged most respondents to utilise it in the face of disasters. For public officials like the city vice mayor, this was most beneficial as “networks” were not just limited to family and friends.



*"It was the outside world. The outside world. To let the people know the situation here. Because there is no other way to communicate. So that was the message I sent out: that we survived and that the situation here is grave and that we need help. Because I have a lot of followers. And at the same time, I have people who are connected to me through Facebook. Yes, the scope that we have. And we knew that if we just put it out, people will just re-post it and share and they will know the situation here in Tacloban."* – Tacloban City vice mayor

Then again, this technology also has its limitations. The city consultant and city vice mayor noted how the volume of demand lessens the effectiveness of the message-relaying process. Keitzmann et al. (2011) stressed that the importance of different relationship traits in an online social platform can be explained using two properties: structure and flow. The structural property refers to how many connections a user has and their position in their network of relationships. The denser and larger a user's portfolio of relationships is and the more central his or her position in the portfolio, the more likely that the user is to be an influential member in their network. The flow property refers to the types of resources involved in individual relationships and how these resources are used, exchanged, or transformed. It also describes the strength of a relationship.

It is thus significant to emphasise the difference in the scope of relationships and the amount of resources generated by the city vice mayor and councillor as compared to the barangays and NGOs. To begin with, the size and density of the city government officials' networks were bigger. However, more important was the resources that these networks connect the individuals to (Halpern, 2005).

*"Mobilised from networks. People got to know us and some of them just responded. There's so many people, people helping us. Yes, yes. That's why they're sharing [on Facebook]. People were just coming to us, contacting us as well and then offering their help already."* – Tacloban City vice mayor

*"Most of those who sought help on Facebook were from Manila and abroad as well – not those from within the city. They were asking for certain people and updates. I also used Facebook in personally connecting or reaching out to businesspeople who left after the typhoon to come back and invest in the city again. The second to third week after Haiyan marked the massive emigration of people, with business and economy struggling and still no electricity."* – City councillor and businessman

Hawkins and Maurer (2010) suggested an example of linking social capital in which those in power not only helped but used their connections and relative advantage to assist others, sometimes in unexpected ways. Leonard and Onyx (2004) noted that people who are recognised in terms of their professional identity can be used as bridging links without the relatively slow process of repeated interaction involved in developing trust that occurs with strong ties. This was revealed by the two city government officials in describing their Facebook use after the super typhoon.

*"In fact, I get to know the situation better because of Facebook. Because they tell me. For example, "Sir, in our barangay, there's no relief yet." Because at that time, the government was bringing relief goods. And we had our own network too. So we, our job until now, was to fill in the gaps. So, I can know which area has still not received any help from the government. So we went there. Through Facebook. 'Ah in this barangay, there was none, they still haven't. So whatever relief that was given to us, we channel it to them [barangay]. We just fill in the gaps.'" – Tacloban City vice mayor*

*"Within the week after the storm, I was able to use the pocket Wi-Fi in responding to the messages in Facebook. Some were from people I didn't even know but asked for my help in locating and verifying the condition of residents in Tacloban. I asked my staff to look for these people and give me the data so I can give a feedback." – City councillor and businessman*

Moreover, it is worth noting that the city vice mayor and city councillor were both known to have strong presence on Facebook. This perceived availability may have contributed to why people sought their help on the social media site. Nonetheless, online presence was insufficient for an exchange to ensue. *Exchange*, as a central concept in sociological analysis, has two central components: relationships and transaction. It requires a relationship between actors that will lead to a transaction (Lin, 2001).

*"For us, by having our own network and letting them know the situation here, we were able to get, and in fact, since a week after I was able to receive my first container van of relief goods. People just spread the word around and our contacts from the churches in Cebu, where I pastored twenty years ago, they started sending for container --- With the first commercial ship from the Gothong, and the Gothong, the owner of the Gothong, happens to be the members of the church. So it was free. The freight was free." – Tacloban City vice mayor*

This supports the overall manner in which Facebook utilised and strengthened the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan. Most exchanges still took place within strong ties; only this time, it included those who were geographically far away. However, despite its mediated form, Facebook did not facilitate the formation of new networks, particularly those from outside their close circles.

Notably, aside from the city councillor who encouraged fellow businesspeople to consider reinvesting in Tacloban after the super typhoon, there was no further statement from other respondents indicating that bridging social capital was used. Nevertheless, Facebook amplified the collective interaction among the respondents and their close circles, extending it to outside linkages that contributed in the mobilisation of aid. People were more willing to take risks in bridging to other networks in search of information and resources when they could work through trusted intermediaries (Leonard & Onyx, 2004). Finally, linking social capital was described by the city vice mayor and city councillor as providing help to Facebook users who recognised their identity as public officials.

### **6.3 Facebook identity and reputation of selected residents of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan: *'Propaganda, accountability, and privilege in a political social media'***

Another significant observation that emerged from the conversations with the respondents was the enduring reference to politics even in social media use. Interestingly, this attribution to inequalities in power and structure did not only prevent the residents from seeking help from government officials through Facebook; it also regulated the Facebook use of local government officials after Super Typhoon Haiyan. For one, the city councillor was critical of other local leaders' Facebook use, calling it a 'propaganda.'

*"They just probably knew that I am the city councillor so they tried to use Facebook to reach me. People were thanking me afterwards on Facebook. And I can see that this has created a positive image for myself – although this was not my intention. The typhoon is an opportunity to help, not for grandstanding." - City councillor and businessman*

The city councillor mentioned the photos on the personal Facebook page of other local government officials, which showed them distributing relief goods, driving trucks, and talking with the people during disaster response. He commented how he finds this as “*epal*” – a Filipino slang which is derived from flipping the letters of the word “*papel*” or ‘paper.’ When one is referred to as *epal*, it means that one is inappropriately representing himself in a situation or joins a conversation, activity, or event without being asked<sup>9</sup> (Arriola, 2012).

Lin (2001) reasoned that *recognition* is an important social process if people who are higher in social position and richer in resources would engage in repeated exchanges with someone lower in social position and poorer resources. He suggested that unequal transactions in exchanges can and do occur because there are payoffs for the actors who give more resources than they receive. For the vice mayor, however, this is called ‘accountability.’

*“For me, it’s a responsibility. I have number one, people were asking: ‘Why do you post these pictures about Yolanda – just for propaganda’ No. It’s for accountability purposes. Because I have donors. I have donors. They have to know how their money was spent. So I have to post it... it’s not just those from outside. Because I cannot go to every barangay here every day. So I will be surprised, I would go to a barangay and they would tell me: ‘You know, I learned of what you’re doing from Facebook.’ People are, for example, I have one based in Cebu, they helped me also. They helped me in providing fibre glass boats, around 52. ‘You know, how come you don’t update so much on Facebook?’ Because they see updates. And they’re happy because every time they see what we’re doing for the city, it also provides them hope that what they’re doing is not in vain. They look for news from me. They want to know.” – Tacloban City vice mayor*

As a mediated form of communication, Facebook indeed has limitations in addressing the issues of trust, security, and credibility needed to establish relationships and encourage exchange of resources. For the city vice mayor, one way to address the limitations of a mediated online tool is by regularly posting a status, which is a positive predictor of bridging social capital (Lee et al., 2014). However, the local official also recognised that the task is not simple.

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<sup>9</sup> This colloquial term may come from the context of entertainment. When one seeks a more prominent attention than what is given on the script, which is written on paper, then the person is “*puma-papel*” (Arriola, 2012).

*“Even now, they’re asking me about the donations they’ve made. Because I haven’t posted for a while. I have to post it now. So I am still having it prepared. So I have people who help me edit before I post it. And that’s the other thing. Sometimes, if I have time, I do it myself. If I don’t have time, I have to ask people to segregate it. ‘Cause sometimes my schedule is really very full.” – Tacloban City vice mayor*

In a virtual platform where identity is created through continuous exchange of media, reputation refers not only to the people as themselves but also the content of their social media pages (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The two local leaders underscored how a public official should represent himself even in an online environment. Both of them regularly post updates on the administrative and legislative plans of the city, including ordinances and resolutions passed during their weekly sessions. They believe that Facebook can help them in their goal of reaching their intended audience on Facebook. They likewise consider that Facebook can render them more vulnerable to the public, including their ‘unintended audience.’

*“I just check my Facebook in the evening, after work. While I recognise the potential of Facebook, my struggle is consistency. I just post whenever I feel like posting. This is because as a public official, I cannot just post and post. I need to consider the language/grammar, review if the data is accurate and this takes work.” – City councillor and businessman*

*“Ah. There is no delineation anymore. That’s the price we pay as public officials. Yes. So there is no more delineation for family, friends or everyone. So for public consumption. At first, I get to post a lot with the family. I try to balance it out. But you will be surprised also. I posted a photo with my family, I get more hits also, more likes. There are times that I post, only to let them know that even as public officials, you still have a family of your own. So I try to balance it. ” – Tacloban City vice mayor*

The need to be represented well can also be seen even among the NGOs. NGO workers cannot just post about their ‘operations’ without the approval of the head office. Indeed, the two NGOs which participated in this study even have dedicated teams for their official Facebook pages, which are usually under their corporate communications department.

*"It's because we are also taking care of Operation Blessing. We have standard for the photos. Not that, because we want to show hope. This is because for some, the angle for this [media] is bloody or what. So, we prefer to post those that portray hope, joy. So that the people will see, 'Ah there is hope.'" – NGO worker #5*

This reinforcement of hope and positive emotions were underscored by the city vice mayor when he stated his preference to use his personal Facebook page and personally answer the queries and comments posted by his followers. The leader believes that Facebook is one way of 'getting the pulse' of the people. It acted as a good feedback tool after the super typhoon.

*"Ah we get, we get for example, I posted a picture of the Sto. Nino church, with lights, parol [lantern] because it was in December. We got a lot of shares and hits. People were happy to see that the church was finally lightened. It shows that they were looking for signs of hope eh. The pulse. Yes. And I, we got to post a view of the Christmas tree and the parol. We've got a lot of hits. It shows that they like to know, that even the recovery was slow, at least there's some signs. And that's what we wanted. Somehow, it inspires them, it comforts them that things are going." – Tacloban City vice mayor*

However, the intention of creating stronger networks through the quality and amount of media shared and the intensity of Facebook use was restricted when the reality of limited internet access and technology proficiency are considered (McKay, 2010). Most respondents, especially from the barangays, stated that they had very limited opportunity to access their Facebook accounts – whether out of scarcity in time and resources or lack of interest. Some statements even indicated Facebook as the 'tool of the privileged.'

*"Not everyone knows how to use Facebook." – Community resident #6, barangay councillor*

*"I didn't because I don't have photos to post." – Community resident #8, barangay councillor and father*

*"I don't use internet most of the time since we don't have Wi-Fi. It's quite hard." – Community resident #5, student*

*"It was them. My children were teaching me. If they were communicating with those --- I was just looking. I do not know how to use it." – Community resident #4, fisherman and father*

*"Good thing before the typhoon hit, I was given by my brother who has a cell phone business, a pocket Wi-Fi, which we topped up with a huge*

*amount of credits. Within the week after the storm, I was able to use the pocket Wi-Fi in responding to messages on Facebook.” – City councillor and businessman*

*“Yes, because I was on a [telecom network] plan. So I was able to connect to Facebook.” – NGO worker #8*

Facebook was even considered as an additional cost. It is just for those who have the time and money for it. Although most of the respondents were aware of the benefits of Facebook, they chose to not invest in it. While the social media platform is free, Internet costs time and money – two things that most respondents (and residents) of Tacloban City cannot afford to give up, especially after the super typhoon.

*“I don’t have time for that, ma’am. Even my husband doesn’t have time. I already lack time for my kids. That’s why when my husband comes home, I would get his cell phone. It was easier to use Facebook using his cell phone.” – Community resident #10, mother and housewife*

*“If you access it at an internet café, you have to pay as well.” – Community resident #7, father*

*“For now, it’s a good project for communication because that’s the fastest method of communication to other country. It’s good. But for now, in our situation, it’s still not appropriate because we haven’t fully recovered yet. Some still don’t even have homes, others are still in tents, and others are in temporary shelters only. Then others still, don’t have any form of livelihood.” – Community resident #6, barangay councillor*

To a certain extent, the barangay respondents positioned their identities and reputation in the social media platform by creating a gap between those who have better internet and Facebook access and those who do not. Those who have more access were associated with the rich. Hence Facebook, which started out as a neutral tool, becomes a value derived from being a privileged member who has access to resources that are not available to other members of the community (Huysman & Wolf, 2004).

However, DeFilippis (2001) argued that connections or ‘bridges’ do not, of themselves make the people in any place rich or poor. It is the power relations, not the level of connections, which control the terms of any relationships. It is

interesting to note that despite the efforts of local government officials in reaching out to the public through Facebook, their intended network still feel disconnected.

In places where corruption is rife, a breach of trust by a professional can have far-reaching effects. As a result, people will return to the slower, more cautious method of developing strong ties through personal experience (Leonard & Onyx, 2004). This was stated by one respondent who aimed to 'expose the realities' on the ground, or his personal experiences with the government's response after the super typhoon, using Facebook.

*"With what's really happening here. Because there, those who don't have houses still haven't got any help. Those who have houses, they received help. What was that? – Community resident #10, housewife and mother*

While people with professional status can play a strategic role in facilitating connections across groups, this was not enough. In order to be a useful link, the professional needs to have demonstrated a commitment to the values of the community (Leonard & Onyx, 2004).

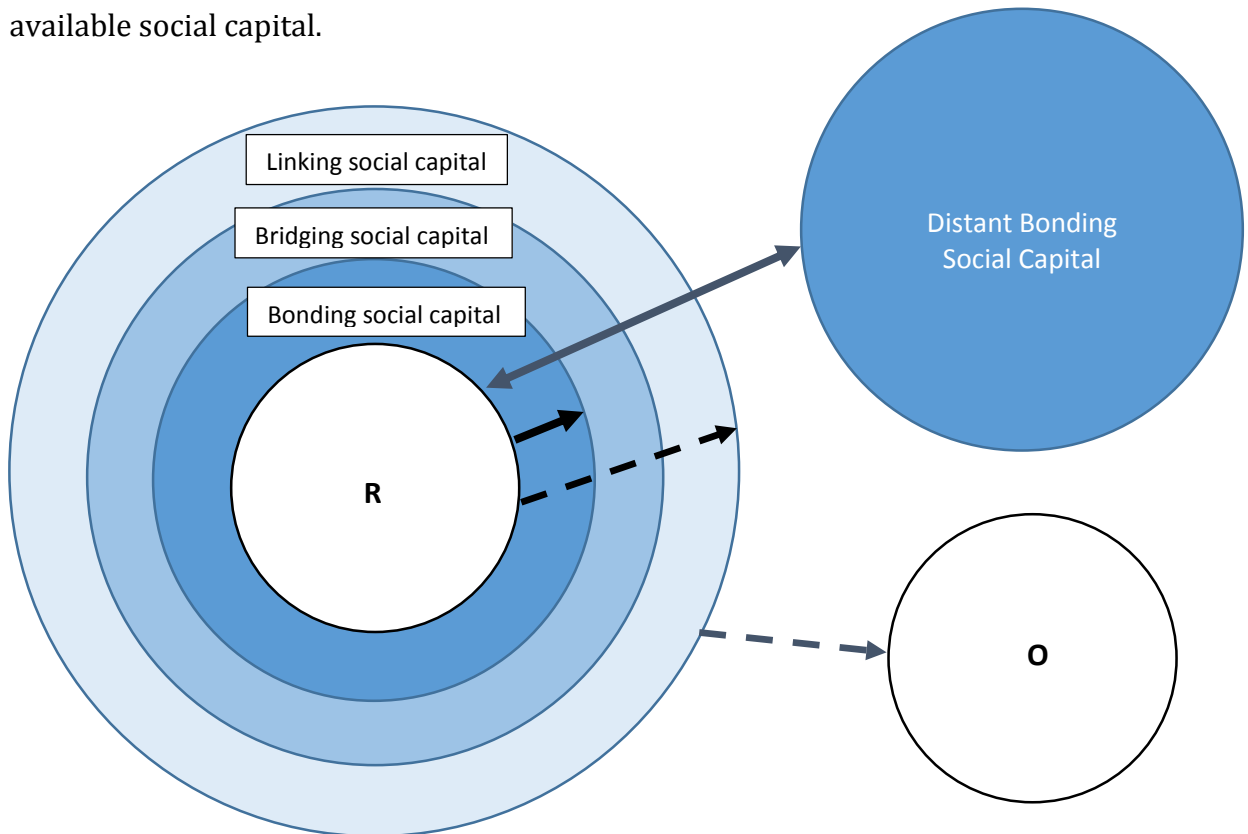
*"No, no, no. I went around. I had to walk. I had no car, no vehicle at that time. I had to walk. To let people know that I am alive. To let people know that there is still a leader here. We stayed with them. We were with them through that time. I think that's something the social media cannot substitute. The ministry of presence is so important during that time for people to have hope and not to get desperate. And I had to walk to tell people that 'help is coming, don't panic. There is help here.' But social media enhances your presence when you're physically bonded with the barangays. That is why for some, in my opinion, everything's done for social media. They just post a picture there, thinking that people will buy into that. But it doesn't work. Because people can see that it's fake." – Tacloban City vice mayor*

This validates the observations made in the literature on social capital and public policy. Social capital is limited in providing long-term benefits as it becomes harder to sustain over an extended period of time beyond the disaster. This was expressed by the local leaders, even after considering the assistance of Facebook. As such, while the value of social capital needs to be recognised and incorporated into early disaster recovery, it is not a substitute for effective public policy (LaLone, 2012). Instead, social capital is a prerequisite for and, in part a consequence of, real forms of formal state support to help people recover (Putnam, 1996).



## 6.4 Facebook Use and Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan: An Overview

As an overview, below is the visual representation of the social capital of Tacloban City with the inclusion of Facebook use after Super Typhoon Haiyan. This is based on the similar figure represented in the earlier chapter, only with few new features indicating the extent in which Facebook utilised and strengthened the city's available social capital.



**Figure 2. The influence of Facebook use in the Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan**

Facebook fully enhanced the existing strong ties of Tacloban City after the super typhoon. Moreover, it extended the geography of the city's bonding social capital, hereafter named *distant bonding social capital*, which generated more resources than the physically proximate bonding social capital. It is represented by a larger, dark solid circle floating on the right, which indicates that while this strong network is relationally proximate it was geographically distant. The solid blue double-arrow that connects it to the respondents suggests that both networks acted as initiators in the successful exchange process that took place in social media.

On one hand, Facebook only strengthened existing strong networks without creating new ones. This is indicated by an absence of a blue arrow between the respondents and the bridging social capital. More significantly, this also means that Facebook has instead even widened the gap among heterogeneous networks. Without this process of activation – a key role in bridging – further access to social resources that can be mobilised for gains is prevented (Leonard & Onyx, 2004). As a mediated form of communication, Facebook is limited in addressing the issues of trust, credibility, and security which are crucial values in relationship building, and thus resource exchange.

Lastly, a fragile form of linking social capital was created when the local government officials used their extended networks and resources on Facebook in providing assistance to the more vulnerable populace who sought their help. This is signified by a broken arrow pointing towards another floating circle, which indicates that this capital was slightly utilised and that others (hence, 'O'), not the respondents, were beneficiaries of this. It also suggests that this form of linking social capital was not sustainable as it is limited in translating the social value into formal state support that will provide long-term recovery for the city, not just for a few.

**Table 2. Social Capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan indicating the presence of relational and geographical proximity of networks with the inclusion of Facebook use**

<b>Type of Social Capital</b>	<b>Relational Proximity</b>	<b>Geographical Proximity</b>
<b>Bonding Social Capital</b> (family members, neighbours and friends)	Yes	Yes
<b>Bridging Social Capital</b> (NGOs and members of other barangays)	No	Yes
<b>Linking Social Capital</b> (local government)	No	No
<b>Distant Bonding Social Capital</b> (geographically dispersed family members and selected friends and neighbours connected through social media)	Yes	No

Nevertheless, the facility of Facebook in enhancing existing strong ties beyond time and space reveal another pathway for the benefits of social capital to be fully accessed and utilised. As shown in Table 2, the creation of a new form of

bonding social capital has allowed the respondents to acquire resources from geographically distant strong ties in times of emergency and calamity. In other words, it has extended the geography of Tacloban City's social capital.

On the other hand, the limitations of Facebook in utilising and strengthening weaker ties paradoxically magnified the disparity among other groups of unequal power and resources. This could have potentially caused a developmental shift from "getting by" (mere survival) to "getting ahead" (moving forwards) (Leonard & Onyx, 2004) after disasters. These findings thus point us toward an exposition of the framework of the Filipino society and social psychology, which can provide deeper insights on what relationships and economy actually mean to Taclobanons.

## **CHAPTER 7: FILIPINO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND THE FACEBOOK USE OF TACLOBAN CITY AFTER SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN**

*“Madaling maging tao, mahirap magpakatao.” [It’s easy to be born a human, but it is not easy to be one.]*

*– Filipino proverb*

The results presented in the two previous chapters were typical in most societies and agree with what the literature says about social capital during disasters (Messias et al., 2012; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Islam & Walkerdén, 2009; LaLone, 2012). However, this study maintains that there are no generic forms of social capital which can be transferred from one setting to another. A better understanding of the choices made by the residents of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan can only be achieved if social capital is viewed as “the product of values that are embedded in local context” (Jennings, 2007, p. 90). Thus, this chapter completes the three-tier discussion on the extent to which Facebook utilised and strengthened the social capital of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan as it relates to the foundations of Filipino social psychology and political culture.

### **7.1 *Kapwa* or the “Shared Self”: The Foundation of Networks in Philippine Society**

The concept of *kapwa* is the basis of social relationships in Philippine society. While its closest English equivalent refers to the word “others,” which denotes an opposition to the self, the father of Filipino psychology Virgilio Enriquez (1986) argued that *kapwa* is a recognition of a shared identity. It is “the unity of the ‘self’ and ‘others’” (p. 11).

A person starts having a *kapwa* not by an implicit understanding of one’s status in relation to others in the society but by developing an awareness of a shared self, extending the “I” to include the “other” (de Guia, 2013). In its most basic sense, having a *kapwa* means putting first the *pagkatao* (dignity) and *karapatan* (rights) of a person by accepting and dealing with the other person as equal, regardless of their status (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). This implies moral and normative

aspects that behove a person to treat others as fellow human beings and therefore as equals.

Enriquez (1986) maintained that the original Filipino idea of others was inclusive. Yet nowadays, most Filipinos think only of their family, neighbours, or immediate circle of friends when they hear the word *kapwa* (de Guia, 2013). The family, which is closely looked into as the basic unit of the society, reinforces common values among its members. These networks were therefore recognised for having a strong shared understanding of values, which did not need to be negotiated during an emergency (Leonard & Onyx, 2004).

Nevertheless, extreme situations such as the urgency and tragedy of a disaster would demand the exploration of other social networks which may or may not recognise the other as *kapwa*. The choices then become complicated given the rich theoretical meanings of Filipino interpersonal relations. According to Enriquez (1986), probing into the Filipino language provides conceptual distinctions into eight levels of Filipino social interactions. These levels further categorise *kapwa* into two: *ibang tao* or the 'outsider' and *hindi ibang tao* or 'one of us.'

A person is regarded as *ibang tao* (outsider) when the interaction only involves the accommodating values of civility and conformity. Meanwhile, if one is considered as *hindi ibang tao* (one of us), the inner values of understanding and mutual trust are engaged in the relationship. Lastly, *pakikipag-kapwa*, the eighth and highest level, embraces all levels and serves as a guiding value in interacting with both the outsider and those the Filipinos consider as one of them.

While *pakikipag-kapwa* is expected from complete strangers to one's most intimate social networks, this does not necessarily translate to immediate request for help, particularly from the unfamiliar others. This makes sense when one acknowledges the distinction between the concepts of *kapwa* as an 'outsider' and 'one-of-us.' While Filipinos still believe that others (outsiders) want what is good for them (Abad, 2005), they could not trust the outsiders to provide assistance until both parties recognise the presence of a shared value or conviction, which turns the 'outsider' into 'one of them.'

Significantly, the assigning of the *kapwa* as an 'outsider' or *ibang tao* is considered a "surface, colonial/accommodative" value, which arose from the need

to negotiate the inner core value of *kapwa* during the Spanish and American rule (Enriquez, 1992; San Juan, 2006). To save face (and perhaps lives), the Filipino would relate with the colonials and elites for the sake of civility (*pakikitungo*) or *pakikisama* (being along with/adjusting/conforming). However, if the relationship truly has a value, the Filipino would rather insist on their *pagkatao* (dignity) and *karapatan* (rights) in the social exchange (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

McKay (2010) claimed that the legal, economic, and social bounding (or unbounding) of individual Filipinos is, at least in part, an element of their cultural heritage taken on under the colonial rule. As such, this is reflected even in their overseas connections. He noted that while reports on friendships of Facebook users in the UK and USA appear far more peer-focused and place-limited, Filipino Facebook profiles are directed towards extended family and long-distance connections. The Filipinos' "Facebook friend lists" typically include parents, siblings, children, uncles, aunts and extended senior or junior kin, including offline friends' parents, many living outside the Philippines.

This explains the choice of the respondents, who nevertheless turned to their families and close relatives despite the opportunity provided by Facebook in accessing other networks after Super Typhoon Haiyan. This also accounts for their expressed confidence that they will receive better and faster help from their families and relatives abroad using Facebook. Meanwhile, aid from foreign NGOs, although well-appreciated, was still considered an "outsider" help.

To a certain extent, the resolution of local NGOs to filter its activities on Facebook can be hinged on the need to build and project trustworthiness. Since this cannot be seen with the government's inactivity on the said social media site, the government was perceived by the respondents as a network which did not share their values. Leonard and Onyx (2004) maintained that where values are different, there is reduced trust. Therefore, there was less likelihood that the government will be used to access help and resources, even on the social networking site.

## **7.2 *Pakiramdam* or “Shared Inner Perception”: The Foundation of Norms in Philippine Society**

A related social significance of the ‘shared’ self is that it does not just reside in one’s core. Essentially, *kapwa* is nurtured and manifested by *pakiramdam* or the pivotal interpersonal value that is akin to emotional intelligence (de Guia, 2013). Directly translated as ‘feeling’ in the English language, *pakiramdam* is defined as a “shared inner perception” or knowing through feeling (Enriquez, 1992).

*Pakiramdam* indicates an unspoken understanding, feeling for, or assessing others in any level of social relationship. This calls for an acute awareness of subtle traces, nuances, and gestures as one decides on the ambiguities of daily life (San Juan, 2006). This heightened sensitivity, de Guia (2013) suggests, makes a good survival tool in events where not all social interactions are carried out with words, such as disasters.

Accordingly, this keen sense of sympathy triggers spontaneous actions of volunteering and helping others that comes with the sharing of one’s self. The combined sense of sharing and sensitivity to others’ needs and feelings are expressed through one’s *kagandahang-loob*, which is translated as “shared inner nobility” (de Guia, 2013, p.183). This guides a person towards dispensing authentic acts of goodness and generosity out of their perceived empathy or *pakiramdam* toward the needs of their *kapwa*.

Paradoxically, this cultural trait also accounts for the ‘calculated risks’ expressed by some respondents in seeking shelter from their neighbours during the onslaught of Super Typhoon Haiyan. Chapter 5 described how some respondents waited for the super typhoon to unleash its full strength, thereby putting their own lives at risk, before they actually sought help from relationally distant yet geographically proximate networks. To some extent, this could be interpreted as the respondents’ way of establishing a reasonable sense of empathy from the ‘outsiders’ so that it would provide better cues on whether their requests for aid will be met or not.

It has been suggested that communities which have high levels of social capital also have strong norms that encourage interaction and cooperative activity (DeFilippis, 2001). Social capital, a value constructed through trust, entails a willingness to take risks in a social context based on a sense of confidence that

others will respond as expected and will act in mutually supportive ways (Leonard & Onyx, 2004; Bankoff, 2007). However, norms do not simply describe behaviour; they prescribe it. Although norms are shared expectations about what is appropriate, they vary in importance and generality (Halpern, 2005).

Moreover, norms and behaviours require a more complex process that involves reinforcement by multiple social contacts. According to Christakis and Fowler (2011), social networks can have properties and functions that are neither controlled nor even perceived by the people within them; instead, they can only be understood by studying the whole group and its structure. In this light, social networks can have *emergent properties* or new attributes of a whole that arise from the interaction and interconnection of the parts. Specifically, collectivist people may become more selective of their norms of friendliness when these are often violated (Leonard & Onyx, 2004), as with the expressed experiences of some respondents with outside help, particularly the foreign NGOs who interviewed them but never came back.

Further still, as Chapter 3 showed, the Philippine society was developed on separate periods and various levels under a colonial hegemony. In these conditions of widespread mistrust, groups naturally and conveniently clustered with whom they share the same attributes and values. Presumably, highly clustered network ties improve information flow and increase reciprocity at a societal level because everyone is looking out for everyone else (Putnam, 2001). However, in the Philippine setting, stronger family ties created a weaker sense of civic community, wherein norms and information simply circulate within groups rather than travelling between them (Christakis & Fowler, 2011). This instead generated a culture of non-verbalised expectations and unclear terms of commitment, especially with members of other networks; hence, the need for *pakiramdam*.

This also shows that culture as a tool for survival (David, 2001) can be both beneficial and damaging. A shared understanding, which leads to an adaptable system of tacit expectations, may be favourable among members of close networks. However, this may not be the case with weaker ties, wherein unspoken values and expectations may instead turn into ambiguous codes that create more tensions than synergy (Lin, 2001). These dynamics become even more perplexing when resources that are embedded in the networks are accessed and exchanged.



### 7.3 “*Utang na Loob*”: Positive and Negative Principles of Reciprocity in Philippine Society

In a social consciousness where conviction and value are the basis for social exchange, Filipinos have a system of contractual obligation where goodwill becomes both a social and physical resource. This is called *utang na loob*, which literally means “a debt of the inside” or “a debt stemming from personal volition” (Kaut, 1961, p.257). It is distinctive from simple *utang* (debt) because it gives more emphasis on *kagandahang-loob* or the act of goodwill shown rather than the physical or tangible favour given. “*Utang na loob* means that the lender is giving a part of himself. He conveys goodwill. Thus, this is what was owed” (Dancel, 2005, p.114).

Since *utang na loob* is a “debt of goodwill,” it cannot just be repaid in material things alone. One has to do another act of benevolence in return, akin to giving one’s self, when the opportunity arises (Wong, 2010). While this practice evokes Filipinos’ attitude towards expressing gratefulness and reciprocating kindness, *utang na loob* may also distressingly place a person at the mercies of their would-be benefactor. Since it hinges on *pakiramdam* and *kagandahang-loob*, there are no formal agreements as to how much was incurred. This makes *utang na loob* essentially difficult, if not impossible, to pay (Kaut, 1961).

Dancel (2005) noted how *utang na loob* can be a humbling, if not humiliating, experience which does not sit well with the Filipino’s sense of *amor propio*, or loosely, ‘pride’ or ‘self-esteem.’ He added that “often it is only in dire circumstances that a Filipino will entreat another for help. In general, however, it is rather uncommon for Filipinos to ask for favours, especially large ones, because it involves incurring *utang na loob*” (p.115).

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that in an obligation relationship, a person who has an obvious need will not be helped by members of his social group unless he solicits that aid. This stems from the condition that he is part of a network of mutually reciprocal obligations, wherein recognising the specific rights of others is a fundamental rule (Kaut, 1961). In the Filipinos’ case, the act of volunteering help will inadvertently place the debtor in a socially vulnerable position which would publicly call attention to his needy position, strip him of his “sense of propriety,” and

place him in a new *utang na loob* relationship because of the voluntary aspect of the aid (Dancel, 2005). This understanding could further explain the recurrence of the themes of self-reliance and self-sufficiency among the respondents when asked about their experiences during the Super Typhoon Haiyan.

Having survived a super typhoon with barely nothing left, the prospect of needing to reciprocate any form of kindness or favour shown during the crisis may be overwhelming for the respondents. At the start of the interview, when asked about their roles in the community, most respondents from the barangay focus group discussions positioned themselves lowly. They then articulated a further downgrade when asked to describe their condition after Super Typhoon Haiyan.

*"Ahm, purok secretary. Then I have a small business. And I am also a plain housewife."* – Community resident #3 [emphasis by the researcher]

*"I am just an ordinary fisherman."* – Community resident #4, fisherman and father [emphasis by the researcher]

*"Oh, it was really difficult. We were lacking since the first day. Just really right after the typhoon, the food, the water. All of these were washed out. We lacked even drinking water. That was the day after the storm."*  
– Community resident #1, purok official and mother

*"Back to zero."* – NGO worker #4, ex-government employee

*"I am just a civilian. I don't have any business anymore because it was taken by Yolanda [Haiyan]."* – Community resident #12

Citing the experiences of housekeepers, helpers, tenants and those with similar occupation or situation, Dancel (2005) noted that being treated with goodness by someone of greater power status does not just incur financial obligations, but *utang na loob* as well. While the amount the housekeeper owes may be difficult to repay, the *utang na loob* eventually becomes impossible to reciprocate. This results in the indebtedness not just of the housekeeper but of their entire family as well.

In those occasions when *utang na loob* is reluctantly incurred, sincere efforts are made by the beneficiary to not only return the favour, but to do so as soon as possible, so as to avoid feeling *hiya* or the loss of face (Wong, 2010). Failure to abide by the contractual obligation is considered extreme ungratefulness for the favour shown or *walang* ("without") *utang na loob*. Depending on the closeness of

relationship and frequency of interaction, it could also mean that the person cannot be trusted since “he has denied responsibility in a system providing social security” (Kaut, 1961, p. 259).

This is because *utang na loob* is not a system of repayment but of reciprocity (Dancel, 2005). As Leonard and Onyx (2004) noted, reciprocity is not a market exchange nor a legal contractual obligation. Hence, it is not formally accounted and not usually visible in the short term. Similarly, once *utang na loob* is reciprocated, it does not stop there. The donor-turned-benefactor, although not expected, would then be returning the favour and the cycle endures (Kaut, 1961).

*Utang na loob* is so deeply manifested in the Filipino society that it defines the boundaries and, to a certain extent, the nature of relationships among individuals. It could thus form the foundation of loyalty, religiosity, and fellowship between people and has even become a means of expressing loyalty to one’s benefactors (Montiel, 2002; Wong, 2010). It also influences the positive and negative behavioural choices one has for status mobility (Kaut, 1961) and is thus susceptible to abuse and misuse, especially when one looks into the relationships of individuals and groups in a bigger society.

#### **7.4 “*Sambahayan to Sambayanan*”: Social Capital in a Family-Oriented Philippine State**

Covar (1998) suggested a general outline of the Philippine socio-political structure wherein the foundation of the society is the family or the *sambahayan*. Beyond kinship, the family is territorially rooted in *pamayanan*. However, unlike in modern societies, Kaelin (2012) argues that the Philippines has no clear delineation among the three institutions (family, civil society, and state), with the family dominating practically each one of them. He described how majority of the country’s top business corporations are family-owned; likewise, political parties are mainly associations of powerful families. If there exists any demarcation in the Filipino society, it is between kin and non-kin.

As described in Chapter 3, the Philippines became a state not through the development of a cohesive national consciousness but through the actions of its former colonial masters. Banlaoi (2004) emphasised that the country’s claim to

statehood is widely based on an anti-colonial sentiment which was not even anchored on a popularly accepted notion of “nationalism” during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of forming “natural” bonds through common historical experience, consanguinity, and identification with a common language or religion, the Filipino nationhood was shaped and promoted by narrow and limited groups of elites, who pursued the interests of the colonisers throughout the regions.

Consequently, this collective formation likewise reflected how resources take on values and how the valued resources are distributed in the society. Again, Covar (1998) provides the diachronic and synchronic parameters that may be utilised in analysing the formation of the Filipino nation – including the distribution of power and resources over time. He posited that the allocation of goods and services during the early formative period was communalistic in nature, where families and bands had free access to natural resources.

On the other hand, it could be observed that during the period of struggle and national consolidation, the assignment of values to resources was achieved through coercion. Lin (2001) argued that in this type of value formation, individual actors do not see the intrinsic value of a resource or voluntarily accept its value because they simply wish to identify with the group. Instead, they are forced to choose between accepting the authoritative assignment of value or suffer undesirable consequences such as physical or mental harm.

David (2001) suggested that distinguishing between the “formative contexts” and “formative routines” – concepts of politics posited by Roberto Unger, a Brazilian professor of law – is a helpful way to understand the unique sets of historical and social circumstances that led to the formation of the Philippine state. *Formative contexts* “comprise all the institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions that shape routine conflicts over the mastery and use of key resources such as economic capital, governmental power, technical expertise, and even prestigious ideals.” *Formative routines*, on the other hand, are “residues of past accommodations and compromises among competing groups in society. The result looks like necessary institutions obeying sociological laws. But they are just conventions that have usually outlived their time” (p.7).

Ideally, institutions are devised constraints on human behaviour. They were created to minimise uncertainty by establishing a stable, though not necessarily efficient, structure for human interaction (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). However, in the case of the Philippines, institutions were created not to define the interactions of the locals but to minimise the uncertainties of the foreign colonisers (Banlaoi, 2004).

Centuries hence, most Filipinos have remained largely indifferent to the content of formal rules. Instead, they perceive constitutions, laws, and ordinances as abstract concepts – or formative routines – used by the elite to justify the extraction of resources from them (Cruz, 2014). Significantly, Sebastian (2013) stated that in Philippine society, there is no discourse on poverty, only a historical account of the emergence of the post-colonial elites. Although history shows numerous opportunities towards a more democratic distribution of resources and power, one dominant segment of capital emerged and remains hegemonic to the present: the diversified conglomerates of oligarchic families (Cruz, 2014).

Beginning in the 1950s, but becoming more obvious in the 1960s, there was instead a simultaneous process of diversification and homogenisation. It was common for family conglomerates to combine ventures in agriculture, import substitution, banking, commerce, and urban real estate under one roof. Up until today, key families continue to share a basic homogeneity of interests on major issues of economic policy (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003).

Therefore, Philippine polity was structured more by networks of personal relationships, largely involving exchanges of favours between prosperous patrons and their poor and dependent clients rather than by organised interest groups such as in Western democracies (Quimpo, 2007). Philippine politics is instead “about personal relations and networks linked by kinship, friendship, exchange of favours, influence and money” (Kerkvliet, 1996, p. 136). This is where social capital, as a value derived from networks, becomes confounding in its application to the Philippine society – including its use of a mediated online social media such as Facebook after disasters.

### 7.5 Online “*Padrino System*”: Facebook Use in a Politicised and Disaster-Stricken Tacloban City

Montiel (2002) noted that politics in strong states usually involve the production, allocation, and use of decision-making powers to govern large groups of individuals. On the other hand, politics “in unstable and weak states encompasses social power issues within and outside the boundaries of the ‘legitimate’ state” (p. 1). This intricate interaction of social and institutional constructs, which produce the often blurred lines between the family and public lives, is evident in a Filipino political culture called the *padrino system*.

The word *padrino* is the Spanish word for ‘patron;’ while the *system* refers to a pattern of interpersonal interactions that reconstitute values on how reciprocities should be organised (Wong, 2010). Plainly, the *padrino system* is the application of the concept of *utang na loob* in a patron-client relationship. However, while *utang na loob* may be simply viewed as the cornerstone of Filipino’s interpersonal trust, which compels one to return a gift or favour after receipt, utilising this in politics demoralises the concept and places both parties in a circulatory cycle of dependency (Dancel, 2005).

*Padrinos* are politicians who, instead of practicing meritocracy, would grant favour, promotion, or political appointment through family affiliation or friendship to secure loyalty from the voters. As a political culture, the *padrino system* is structure-embedded. This means that the *padrino system* operates because there is a relatively permanent arrangement of power and wealth, where structure of social networks can dramatically reinforce two kinds of inequality in the society.

First, *situational inequality*, wherein some are relatively better off socio-economically. Second, *positional inequality*, wherein some have the advantage based on their locations in the networks (Christakis & Fowler, 2011). Nevertheless, while there are two political cultures (those who are at the top and those below), both feed on each other’s set of political expectations and practices (Montiel, 2002).

Thus, it is not surprising that during election season in the Philippines, there is a sudden increase in the invitations extended to politicians to become sponsors in baptism and weddings (David, 2001). The acceptance of politicians to religious and social invitations signify their affiliation with those who invited them, which are usually the local leaders. Indeed, Wong (2010) even noted that the Spanish term

*padrino* is equivalent to the Filipino terms *ninong* (godfather/male sponsor) and *kumpadre* (co-father). Now that both parties are connected by a sense of kinship, the local leader's family can expect to be given employment opportunities and other special politico-economic favours by this politician. In turn, the politician can expect the leader's family to help during the campaign period (Montiel, 2002).

In a structure-embedded exchange, Lin (2001) explained that the value of resources are also time-bound. This means that the value of resources may change either due to internal (civil war, revolution, upheaval, disaster, discoveries, changes in fashion, etc.) or external (war, trade, invasion, conquest, exchange of ideas) circumstances. Nevertheless, it is assumed that in any of these circumstances, all actors will promote their own interests by maintaining and gaining valued resources, with the former outweighing the latter.

Moreover, when the community's survival is challenged, the community promotes its self-interest by conferring relatively higher statuses on individual actors who possess more valued resource. To a certain extent, the self-interests of selected actors are allowed to be pursued as long as it aligns with the collective interest (Leonard & Onyx, 2004). The paradox is that while these advantaged ones are favoured because of their skills and knowledge, and the expectation that they will carry out the rules and procedures that sustain the community, these individuals are also given opportunities to act according to their whims – a reliance on their ability and willingness to interpret properly and act effectively and creatively (Lin, 2001).

Meanwhile, individuals who have less valued resources and thus lower standing in the community experience greater structural constraints and less opportunities to innovate. There are two types of actions these individuals can take: either appropriate more valued resources or change the values assigned to various resources (through education or deviant actions) (Lin, 2001). Therefore, this "opportunity structure" shows that individual actors, through their interactions and social networks, are differentially accessible to resources which constrains their choices (DeFilippis, 2001).

The Super Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban City was clearly an opportunity in the redistribution of valued resources in the communities. The collective interest of

Tacloban City at that time was to generate resources (specifically basic living amenities such as food, water, clothes and later, financial funds for the rebuilding of homes and businesses). Still, owing to the elites' bigger networks and more valuable resources, the disaster instead favoured the elites' as they either gained more valued resources or had the chance to manipulate the value assigned to their resources.

This is what Christakis and Fowler (2011) argued when they stated that network inequality creates and reinforces inequality of opportunity. Those with many connections tend to be connected to other people with many connections, while those with few ties may get left farther and farther behind. Significantly, even in an increasingly interconnected world of social media, resources may flow even more toward those with particular locations in physical social networks. This is what most respondents in Tacloban City expressed with regard to Facebook use after Super Typhoon Haiyan (see also Chapter 6).

*"If I know how to use it [Facebook], probably I will. I will be more updated with the news [about aid and relief]. Yeah. But that's how we older people are; we just watch news. Ask updates from our relatives. That's just how we do things."* – Community resident #4, fisherman and father

This case study has thus highlighted the importance of carefully considering the distinct social, cultural, and political realities of a specific locality as one explores the possibilities of using a mediated communication tool such as Facebook during disasters. Facebook, as a tool, can either become one of two things: a digital link or a digital divide. Thus far, Tacloban City has generally perceived the said social media as a repressive political tool.

*"Even I, I am already a barangay official, yet I still feel shy [to connect with city government officials]. That is the Filipino culture and respect. The way you see yourself, they are above you."* – Community resident #6, barangay councillor

While the city vice mayor saw Facebook as an opportunity to "break the barriers of bureaucracy," the rest of the respondents were cautious not to utilise it as an online form of *padrino system*. The need to forge a 'personal relationship' before one can access or contact those who are in leadership positions was repeatedly expressed in the interviews and focus group discussions. This signals a challenge toward finding more creative ways of using Facebook in facilitating a



more useful model of society, wherein strong ties bond with weaker ties without perpetuating a deceiving sense of connection that isolates those who have more from those who have less.

## CHAPTER 8: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN TACLOBAN CITY'S POST-HAIYAN DEVELOPMENT

*"Haiyan spotlights the need for cities like Tacloban to be more prepared for the new normal, as the strength of each city comes from the mindset of its people, and that education and building of social capital is absolutely critical in order to incorporate resilience into all aspects of life."*

*- Tacloban City Mayor Alfred Romualdez<sup>10</sup>*

This case study sought to investigate the growing interest regarding the possibility of creating disaster-resilient communities by utilising and strengthening their social capital through social media. It specifically investigated Tacloban City, an area hit hardest by Super Typhoon Haiyan on 08 November 2013. Haiyan was considered as the most powerful tropical cyclone that ever landed on earth as of date, causing immense damage of infrastructures and loss of lives. It also highlighted the increasing role of Facebook in facilitating and influencing disaster aid and response, particularly in a developing country such as the Philippines.

Due to the increasing incidences of natural calamities, of which the poor are usually severely affected, disaster management has shifted into a developmental perspective that focuses on building or making disaster-resilient cities and communities rather than simply determining and addressing their risks and vulnerabilities (Bhatt & Reynolds, 2012). This socio-ecological paradigm posits that financial, technological, and governmental resources alone are not enough to allow communities to 'bounce back better' after a disaster. The inherent linkages within the society are crucial in activating these adaptive capacities to provide faster and better recovery for its members (Dufty, 2012).

This concept, called social capital, describes how people are connected within a given locality and how resources are deeply embedded in these networks. It suggests that communities recover faster when they are highly connected since the flow of information and resources are open and readily accessible (Aldrich, 2012). Thus, it describes a society composed of strong networks that are continuously engaged in reciprocal relationships within a given set of norms that

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<sup>10</sup> Remarks of Mayor Romualdez during the special screening of a documentary produced by the Discovery Channel as it revisited Tacloban one year after Super Typhoon Haiyan. (<http://entertainment.inquirer.net/155273/discovery-channel-revisits-tacloban-a-year-after-yolanda>)

promotes trust, which in turn facilitates further exchanges that are cyclical and self-reinforcing (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993).

Social capital has been on the ascent because of social media, an online technology which has the ability to provide both timely access to information and social connectedness among its users beyond community or national boundaries (Lin, 2001). Its role and effects on the behaviour of people in disasters are generally perceived as useful, effective, and successful. However, few studies have actually examined how social media changes the way people, particularly in developing countries, mobilise themselves when facing risks while taking into consideration the underlying social order and power relations within their communities.

This is where Tacloban City provides a conceptually fertile context with regards to this interest. Located at the eastern part of the Philippines, Tacloban City averages up to 20 tropical cyclones a year. While the people are used to typhoons and the local government adheres to an existing national framework for disaster management, these capacities are usually hampered by conflicting sectoral and political interests. In fact, the longstanding rivalry of two political families, from which the current president of the Philippines and the city mayor of Tacloban belong to, was said to have greatly impeded the disaster response following the super typhoon. This results in a diminishing capacity of the state to provide support and assistance to its people before and, all the more, after a disaster.

It is thus not surprising that when Super Typhoon Haiyan hit Tacloban City, most survivors turned to Facebook to seek information and assistance. Who did they turn to? What made them choose these networks over other potential networks made more accessible by Facebook? Most importantly, were they able to generate enough resources for them to not just recover faster but become more resilient from future hazards?

The responses from selected residents of Barangays 89 and 48-B, selected members of two local NGOs (Community & Family Services International and Operation Blessing - Visayas), and three members of the city government (vice-mayor, urban and environmental consultant, and city councillor) during separate interviews and focus group discussions reveal interesting insights on the role of social media and social capital in Tacloban City's post-Haiyan development.

Firstly, ***Facebook extended the geography of Tacloban City's social capital after Super Typhoon Haiyan by allowing its residents to inform their families and relatives residing in different countries of their condition and consequently receive help from them.*** With over two million Filipinos who are working overseas as of 2013 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014), the residents of Tacloban City pushed the physical boundaries of their social connections by contacting their families and relatives abroad through Facebook. Most respondents reported to have received money and physical goods through their correspondences on the said social media site. However, looking closely at their statements, their social choice uncovers a deep-seated aspiration to be self-sufficient in a context of amplified political tension and competitive access for resources after a massive disaster.

When people organise themselves, they do so in order to gain control over their lives or simply to successfully insulate themselves from the stabilities of daily life (David, 2001). Since the Haiyan survivors cannot rely on themselves or their families and friends who were nearby as “they were also victims,” they found an alternative pathway that would at least provide for a decent existence after the disaster. Nevertheless, while help from Facebook contacts reached them faster, it was still not adequate to help them recover. One respondent even mentioned receiving PhP4,000 (US\$90) from a relative abroad and sharing it with three other siblings.

This makes one think why the respondents did not consider seeking help from those with greater resources or wider capacities such as the government, given that an online tool is on hand. Instead, for respondents to say that “there was no government” or “we cannot rely on the government, otherwise we will die” has put the spotlight on the wide and entrenched culture of cynicism and violation of public trust in the Philippine society.

The nation's history describes centuries of oppression and exploitation not only by foreign colonisers but more so, the local landed elites and their oligarchic families ruling under a neopatrimonial system. This extended social capital, while very promising, actually means two things for the Philippine society: (1) Facebook can help make communities resilient as the technology allowed them to stand on their own without outside intervention. However, (2) this can cover up for the negligence, inefficiency and incapacity of the state in fulfilling its role towards the

people. There is even more danger posed in using Facebook in providing direct access to state services as this may allow government officials to think that they are actually doing their job. Yet in fact, they are just perpetuating a corruptive cycle of dependency and patron-client relationship – this time, in an online setting.

This is because ***Facebook was limited in addressing the socio-political realities of Tacloban City, which is clouded with uncertainty and mistrust, rendering the application of social capital in developing countries a highly contentious endeavour.*** Interestingly, this research on a seemingly ‘neutral’ topic on Facebook use has instead led to a deeper probe into the unique sets of historical and social circumstances that formed the Philippine society today. It showed that Filipinos are highly connected people but due to periods of colonisation, they had to negotiate their inner core value of *kapwa* (treating the other as an extension of one’s self) into a surface, accommodative value that categorises the other person as either an ‘outsider’ or ‘one of them.’

This delicate distinction branches out into often ambiguous ways on how Filipinos form relationships through *pakiramdam* (or shared inner perception) and assign values on resources and exchanges through *utang na loob* (debt out of goodwill). Nevertheless, across all societal activities in the Philippines, there is a constant and essential significance placed on establishing personal relationships – one that gives a sense of kinship. This necessity to foster trust is a need that Facebook, as a mediated communication tool, obviously cannot address.

Based on the respondents’ statements, the Filipinos see their online activities on Facebook as an extension of their personal identity. As such, they will not contact any person whom they are not familiar or familial with. Even more, they will not allow themselves to be continually indebted to someone whom they do not trust. This is because in a social consciousness wherein shared conviction and values are the basis of relationships, social exchanges do not just involve material or physical goods alone. Instead, an act of goodwill becomes a part of a lifetime reciprocal and contractual obligation.

This becomes even more critical given the family-dominated structure of the Philippine state. The Filipino reality is that the values acquired by individuals from the family are neither lost nor given up as they interact with the larger society but

only extended, if not modified (Kaelin, 2012). Often, the Filipinos' way of relating to the public is by including them in the private sphere, as evidenced by the *padrino system* or the negative principles of reciprocity in politics. This explains the expressed concern of the respondents to be careful and selective with whom they connect with after the disaster, especially among those in the government, lest they be placed in an even more vulnerable position.

Paradoxically, ***Facebook has amplified the structural inequalities already present in Tacloban City before it was hit by Super Typhoon Haiyan.*** While it enhanced strong ties, it has failed to forge weaker ties. Worse, it has instead widened the gap between those who have more power over the access of resources and those who have less.

This study recognised that those in power used their connections and relative advantage to assist others with the aid of Facebook, like what the city vice mayor, city councillor, and city consultant reported in their interviews. However, the widespread cynicism instead saw this as an opportunity to grandstand. Besides, the intention to reach out to the public using Facebook was constrained considering the limited internet access and technological proficiency of most Taclobanons. As a result, Facebook was viewed as a repressive, political tool: a utility for propaganda for those in power; and a new framework that further disconnects those who are already disconnected.

Jennings (2007) noted that “when social capital is presented as a wonder drug to alleviate the impact of structural inequalities, it thereby becomes a rhetorical mechanism that dismisses institutional and policy causes of structural inequalities” (p.90). It is remarkable that despite the digital frontiers we have crossed, people still act in very human ways. Self-interest, greed, bias, altruism or affection are still very much at work even when we cross over to the digital world (Christakis & Fowler, 2011).

This study thus offers a word of caution, so to speak, in using Facebook in promoting social connectedness and building community resilience. It acknowledges that social media provides a better alternative for disaster management as people can now communicate their priorities and expectations, as

compared to the traditional model which relies on the assumptions of political leaders and aid agencies who are often far away from emergencies. It likewise gives way to a rapid decentralization of power as communications technology makes it easier, even ignoring traditional hierarchies, for more participants to enter the fields of emergency and disaster response (UNOCHA, 2012).

However, while social media allows greater connectivity, it is the element of social capital as “a social metaphor about competitive advantage” (Burt, as cited by Cao et al., 2013, p.1672) that favours people who are ‘better connected.’ Murthy (2013) argues that this sense of proximity may only be an imagined vision, particularly of the relatively well-off population of the communities, rather than a representative of reality.

Moreover, while the value of social capital needs to be recognised and incorporated into early disaster recovery, this study shows that it is not sustainable for an extended period of time after the disaster. Hence, it is not enough to contribute to building resilience in communities. While social capital needs much greater attention and incorporation into planning, it does not mean that social capital can be a replacement for real federal disaster-assistance policies that will truly benefit the poor majority (LaLone, 2012).

In other words, nothing can substitute for actual activities that strengthen physical social networks through effective public policy and conscientious political practice. In fact, to say it more radically, the disaster can be a timely opportunity for those who are at the top of the societal structure and relatively better off economically to level the playing field and reassign the values attached to resources and social exchanges. Echoing the words of DeFilippis (2001), connections themselves do not make people in any place rich or poor; it is exactly the opposite: isolation. If Tacloban City – and even the Philippine society in general – is really serious about building back better communities, what needs to change are those power relations, not the level of connections.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **Interview and Focus Group Discussion Schedule**

#### **“Social Capital and Facebook Use of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan”**

##### **INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

1. What is your role in the community?  
*Ano po ang inyong tungkulin sa komunidad?*
2. Can you describe your experience during Typhoon Haiyan?  
*Maaari nyo po bang ilarawan ang inyong karanasan noong bagyong Yolanda?*
3. Who did you send out your request for help after Typhoon Haiyan? What are your reasons for choosing them? What were your means to reach them?  
*Sinu-sino po ang mga hiningan ninyo ng tulong pagkatapos ng bagyong Yolanda? Bakit po sila ang pinili nyo? Paano nyo po sila naabot?*
4. Did you use Facebook after the typhoon? What do you think are the reasons why people use (or not use) Facebook after Typhoon Haiyan?  
*Gumamit po ba kayo ng Facebook pagkatapos ng bagyong Yolanda? Ano po sa tingin ninyo ang mga dahilan kung bakit gumagamit o hindi gumagamit ang mga tao ng Facebook pagkatapos ng bagyong Yolanda?*
5. What do you think of the government’s Facebook page after Typhoon Haiyan?  
*Ano po ang masasabi ninyo tungkol sa Facebook page ng gobyerno pagkatapos ng bagyong Yolanda?*
6. How do you feel about the other Facebook pages regarding Typhoon Haiyan?  
*Ano po ang inyong pakiramdam tungkol sa ibang mga Facebook pages tungkol sa bagyong Yolanda?*
7. What do you think should be the most important thing a community should have during a natural disaster?  
*Ano ba ang pinakamahalagang bagay na dapat mayroon ang isang komunidad tuwing may bagyo?*



## APPENDIX TWO

### Participant Information Sheet

#### Participant Information Sheet for a Study on the use of Facebook in building the Social Capital of Tacloban City after Typhoon Haiyan

Researcher: *Arla E. Fontamillas*

School of Geography, Environment, and Earth Sciences

Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The project aims to find out how the use of Facebook contributes to the social capital (that is, the involvement of people in groups and the amount of solidarity and trust it generates) of Tacloban City after Typhoon Haiyan. The research has approval from the VUW Human Ethics Committee.

This project involves the city government of Tacloban City (mayor, vice mayor, and city councillors), selected members of the *barangays*, and the NGOs working in the affected areas. One-on-one interviews will be conducted with the mayor and vice mayor and members of the city council. Meanwhile, the members of the communities and NGOs will be asked to participate in focus group discussions. While a conversational approach will be used, both the interviews and focus group discussions will employ a list of standardized, open-ended questions that will allow the participants to ask or probe further. The interviews and discussions will be recorded. Participants have the right to withdraw (including any information they have provided) from this project before **12 July 2014** without having to give reasons.

The research will be conducted in English and *Tagalog*. Your responses are very important as this will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on a confidential basis (with the exception, of course, to our public officials whose nature of work and other attributions may easily identify them). However, only grouped responses will be presented in this report. Also, all material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Professor John Overton, will have access to the materials. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Geography, Environment, and Earth Sciences and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Audio tapes used during the interviews and focus group discussions and other related materials will be destroyed three years after the end of the project.

If at any the point the participants experience any form of stress as a result of participating in this study, they may get in touch with Tacloban City Social Welfare and Development Office at Magsaysay Blvd., Tacloban City. If you have any further questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at **0927-4731743** or my supervisor, Professor John Overton, through his email: [john.overton@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:john.overton@vuw.ac.nz).

## APPENDIX THREE

### Participant Consent Form

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Title of project:** Social Capital and Facebook Use of Tacloban City after Super Typhoon Haiyan

☐ I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project before **12 July 2014** without having to give reasons.

☐ I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, the supervisor and the person who transcribes the tape recordings of our interview. I understand that the published results will not use my name. While it is not possible to guarantee total confidentiality in small-knit communities, the research will not identify any individuals where identification may cause risk or harm for the participant. I understand that the tape recording of interviews will be wiped three years after the end of the project unless I indicate that I would like them returned to me.

☐ I understand that I can withdraw from participating in the middle of the interview/discussions any time I want to without having to give reasons.

☐ I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research.

☐ I understand that I will be given a summary of the interview before publication.

☐ I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my written consent.

☐ I would like to receive a summary of the results of the research when it is completed.

☐ I agree to take part in this research.

**Name of participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing address (for the provision of report summary):**

\_\_\_\_\_

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