ARTICLE

Binabahang tahanan: Notions of home amidst disaster in a peri-urban relocation site

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ABSTRACT

In the face of mounting dilemmas and precarities—poverty, eviction, displacement, and disasters, how do urban poor relocatees construct and negotiate their notions of home? This research gathered narratives focused on the notions and aspirations of home of members of San Isidro Kasiglahan, Kapatiran, at Damayan para sa Kabuhayan, Katarungan, at Kapayapaan (SIKKAD-K3). SIKKAD is an urban poor organization that led the occupation of a flood-prone portion of one of the largest housing and relocation projects of the national government in Kasiglahan Village, Rodriguez, Rizal, Philippines. Informed by Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling's (2006) critical geography of home, this study deliberately frames the home as both a material space and an imaginary while also highlighting its multi-scalar characteristic. In documenting the short history of a peri-urban poor occupation movement and its members' homemaking practices, this work echoes Solange Muñoz (2017) in asserting that the right to the city begins at home. Based on storytelling, participant observation, and key informant interviews, it categorizes SIKKAD members' notions of home into four themes: home as owned, home as a temporal imaginary, home as a material space continuously created and claimed through homemaking (for women) or made through investments and maintenance (for men), and home as multi-scalar. Grounded insights about what "home" means to urban poor relocatees who are consistently exposed to disaster are essential in evaluating and developing social housing plans, projects, and policy. Additionally, this work's findings may be used to improve social conditions in relocation sites and inform disaster risk reduction and management plans that are implemented in these areas.

KEYWORDS
home, homemaking, disaster, gender, relocation

Introduction

Urban poor relocatees (i.e., urban poor populations transferred to relocation sites in peri-urban areas) usually bear the brunt of multiple and compounded losses (Diwakar and Peter 2016; Sholilah and Shaojun 2018; Vanclay 2017). They are forced out of cities by violent demolitions that reduce their houses to scraps and, if lucky enough not to be left to fend for themselves, are relocated to far-flung and almost bare relocation sites. While most of the displaced urban poor rebuild their homes back in the city to be nearer livelihood opportunities, some make do with their housing units in relocation sites. However, given the conditions in these sites, it is very difficult for populations to sustain themselves. Further compounding their situation is when homes and communities in these relocation sites are hit by disasters, such as floods. This additional burden is typically shouldered by the women (Cutter 2017; Reyes and Lu 2016), who are expected to perform reproductive work and care for the family.

This study gathered narratives focused on the notions and aspirations of home of urban poor relocatees who occupied a portion of one of the biggest socialized housing projects of the national government in Kasiglahan Village, Rodriguez, Rizal, Philippines. It aims to contribute to Philippine scholarship by providing a short history of a peri-urban occupation movement and by recognizing and foregrounding the urban poor relocatees' notions of home and disasters. Following Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling's (2006) critical geography of home, the study, in exploring the notions of homes and disasters of urban poor relocatees, deliberately conceives the home as both a material space and an imaginary with multi-scalar characteristics. It also echoes Solange Muñoz's (2017) assertion that the right to the city begins at home.

A critical geography of home

Blunt and Dowling (2006) suggest developing a feminist and critical geography of home. In their seminal book *Home* (2006), they assert that the concept of home must be considered not only as a physical structure but also as a spatial imaginary, or a "set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places" (2). They propose to expand the framework of understanding the "home" by moving away from, or reinterpreting the frame of housing studies, Marxism, and humanism, toward developing a critical geography of home that "moves beyond a binary of exclusionary or idealized space" (22). In this way, they aim to show that home is an ambiguous space that is both spatialized and politicized.

The home was primarily regarded by the geographical canon as a space of authenticity that provided people with a sense of place and belonging in an increasingly alienating world (Moore 2000). It has been constructed as "a place liberated from fear and anxiety, a place supposedly untouched by social, political and natural processes, a place enjoying an autonomous and independent existence"

(Kaika 2004, cited in Brickell 2012, 225). Blunt and Dowling veer away from this house-as-haven thesis that associates home with feelings of safety and familiarity and states that the home has become "an intensely political site" (142) in recent years. They note that numerous case studies have highlighted the differences between ideals and lived or actual realities of home; thus, the understanding of home as a space has increasingly been scrutinized in the literature.

In the case of Filipino slum dwellers who were compelled by their circumstances to occupy an idle and flood-prone portion of one of the largest socialized housing projects of the national government in Rodriguez, Rizal, their notions of a "home" may have less to do with ideas of "safety," "protection," and "livability"—concepts of home that have been taken for granted and perceived as a social fact—and might have more to do with homemaking or the "cultivating, nurture and preservation of home" (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, 5). Additionally, their notions of home may be related to the realization of their hopes of finally having a safe and acceptable physical space to settle in, even though the reality may turn out otherwise.

Given SIKKAD's unique history, my research thus investigates what home or *tahanan* means for the women members as well as their husbands/partners, of San Isidro Kasiglahan, Kapatiran, at Damayan para sa Kabuhayan, Katarungan, at Kapayapaan (Liveliness, Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and Mutual Aid for Livelihood, Justice and Peace) (SIKKAD-K3). I also aim to understand how they negotiate their notions of a *tahanan* when faced with disasters like intense flooding, and what these disaster events meant to them. Additionally, through this study, I would like to initially explore the concept of the right to home—a concept that is closely related to the right to the city and is informed by varying and marginal notions of home and practices of homemaking.

Studying "home": A review of related literature

According to Blunt and Dowling (2006), there are three dominant frameworks and intellectual traditions in which the "home" has been understood and theorized: housing studies, Marxism, and humanism. Housing studies are mostly concerned with four strands: 1) housing policy, 2) the economics of housing provision, 3) house design, and 4) the experience and meaning of home. Although seemingly complex and wide-ranging enough to aid in an analysis of "home," Blunt and Dowling break off from housing studies' focus on housing as "the sole entry point into understanding home" because "the spatialities of home are broader and more complex than just housing" (10). They argue that although a home may often be associated with a built form, a home is not always a house:

> [O]ne can live in a house and yet not feel 'at home'. A house environment may be oppressive and alienating as easily as it may be supportive and comfortable, as shown by domestic violence, 'house arrest' and home detention as alternatives to prison, experiences of poverty and poor housing conditions, and the alienation often felt by young gay men and lesbians in parental homes. (10)

Meanwhile, Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that Marxist scholars and approaches largely ignored 'home' as it focused primarily on "production, workplaces and labor" (10). According to them, "home" only figured in Marxist theory as a sphere of reproduction, where a home is perceived as a space of social reproduction and treated as a space where labor power is reproduced and "where workers are fed, rested, clothed and housed" (11). Humanist geographers, on the contrary, place the "home" in the front and center of their analysis. In exploring the meanings and significance of home among different people, they assert that home is an essential place where identity is grounded. Theirs is a conception of home as a static entity, in which home "was seen to be under threat from, rather than enabled by, the modern world" (14).

Blunt and Dowling (2006) advocate for the expansion of the understanding of "home" by moving away or reinterpreting the frames of housing studies, Marxism, and humanism, to accommodate a feminist and critical lens. To them, gender is critical in understanding home, because "home is a key site in the oppression of women" (15). Thus, Blunt and Dowling's (2006) critical geography of home applies a *spatialized* understanding of home—one that recognizes the home as a place, but also as a spatial imaginary "that travels across space and is connected to particular sites"; moreover, it has a *politicized* understanding of home, which is "alert to the processes of oppression and resistance embedded in ideas and processes of home" (22). They draw out three essential components of a critical geography of home: home as simultaneously material and imaginative; home as the nexus among home, power, and identity; and home as multi-scalar (Blunt and Dowling 2006). In the current study, I generously utilize the first and third components, in which I frame the home as simultaneously material and imaginative, constantly created through "homemaking practices," transcendent of the bounds of a household/house, and a porous intersection of social relations.

Home, gender, and disaster

The various experiences and meanings of home in different forms of housing prove to be a strong strand in housing studies (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Three key articles that study the different meanings of home are summarized by Blunt and Dowling (see Table 1). Although these findings are based on Western literature, they may resonate with most people's meanings of home, i.e., home is equivalent to a shelter that provides people with security and belonging as well as an opportunity to express oneself.

Table 1. Research-identified meanings of home

Depres (1991)	Somerville (1992)	Mallett (2004)
Material structure	Shelter	House
Permanence, continuity	Hearth	Ideal
Security and control	Heart	
Refuge	Paradise/Haven	Haven
Status	Abode	
Family, friends	Privacy	
Reflection of self		Expression or symbol of self
Centre of activities	Roots	Being-in-the-world
Place to own		

Source: Blunt and Dowling 2006,10.

Meanwhile, scholars have argued that the meanings attached by people to houses are varied and influenced by one's culture (Rakoff 1977). Additionally, how one makes use of spaces depend on one's gender (Boris and Prugl 1996). Robert Rakoff (1977) argues that "the range of meanings that people ascribe to houses varies greatly, of course, from one culture to another" (85). Further, he states that the house is "not just a commodity or a physical place; it is also a cultural artifact which is meaningful to people, and its meanings are both privately experienced and collectively determined" (88). Hazel Easthope (2004) suggests that it is when a structure is inscribed with meaning that it becomes a home.

Meanwhile, gender is an important factor in the different conceptions and meanings people attach to a home. In their study on the social meanings of domestic architecture in Britain, Ruth Madigan and Moira Munro (1991) discuss the ways in which women and men experience housing differently. First, citing works on the feminization of poverty, they assert that women benefit less compared to their partners in terms of access to the housing market and to the benefits that one may reap from being an owner-occupant of a house. Second, given that women are socially expected to maintain the home, engage in child-rearing, and be the quintessential "homemaker," a home comes to occupy "a greater centrality in the lives of women as compared with men" (117).

The centrality of the home in the lives of women is also evident in times of disaster (Shah 2012). Filipino women, for example, tend to bear greater burdens than men in relation to the effects of disastrous events (Abarquez and Parreño 2014). Women are more likely to shoulder additional burdens during or after disasters, as reproductive work and care-giving duties at home may increase

(Enarson, Fothergill, and Peek 2007). Women have also been found to be more inclined to contract post-disaster diseases, which can be attributed to poorer conditions pre-disaster, such as poor nutrition (Abarquez and Parreño 2014). Disasters also significantly lower the life expectancy of women compared to men (Neumayer and Plumper 2007). The stress from disasters increases the cases of violence against women in hardly hit communities (David and Enarson 2012). These facts prove Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plumper's (2007) assertion that the impact of disasters is "never entirely determined by nature, but is contingent on economic, cultural, and social relations" (551). Further, patriarchal culture and societal norms—compounded by the social and environmental changes in the past years—have greatly contributed to the impacts of disasters on women and children (Cutter 2017).

The vulnerability and plight of women during or after disaster events thus brings into serious question the house-as-haven thesis put forth by housing studies scholars. Disasters, especially when they hit and "unmake" communities, could evoke strong, ambivalent, and negative feelings regarding the home, especially among women who are socially expected to be the "homemakers." Additionally, Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that even during non-disaster or non-emergency events, home environments may still be oppressive and alienating as easily as they may be supportive and comfortable (10). Instances that might generate negative feelings associated toward the home may be illustrated in cases of violence against women, which most often than not, occur in the confines of the home. In fact, Price (2002, as cited in Brickell 2012) emphasized how "the ideological scripting of home as intimate and safe makes violence against women difficult to see, with women often tolerating violence so as not to signal a deep failure or collapse of home" (40).

Housing and the right to home

The rising cost of rent, the threat of eviction and displacement, and the lack of affordable and livable housing options plague the Filipino urban poor. World Bank data states that 42 percent of the Philippine population live in slums (World Bank, n.d.). Meanwhile, the backlog on socialized housing was estimated to have reached 5.7 million units in 2016 (Remo and Sauler 2017). Philippine Vice President Leni Robredo comments that given this rate, the government would need to build 2,602 housing units every day over a six-year period to resolve the said backlog (Pasion 2016). To address this housing shortage, President Duterte's administration, under its "Build, Build, Build" program, "plans to deliver housing assistance to almost 1.56 million households by 2022," through the National Housing Authority (NHA) (Arcilla 2018, 85).

The inability to obtain stable, decent, and accessible housing, coupled with the constant fear and anxiety resulting from tenure insecurity further subjects the urban poor to precarious conditions and curtails their right to the city (Muñoz

2017). Scholarship on the right to the city asserts that to inhabit the city, one must be able to discern and take part in how it is used, especially in ways that allow them to contribute to the city and upgrade the quality of life of its residents (Lefebvre 1991, Purcell 2002). According to Muñoz (2017), when the urban poor do not have access to housing and, therefore, cannot engage in homemaking practices from which their families stand to benefit, their ability to actively participate in the making and development of the city are impeded. In turn, this curtails their right to the city. She frames homemaking practices as a placemaking strategy to appropriate urban spaces and access urban resources; hence, she asserts that the right to the city must begin at home.

Addressing the gaps

In scenarios of displacement following disasters, several problems arise, one of which is the "doubleness" that people experience as they build new homes while also longing for their previous homes (Brun and Lund 2008). Cathrine Brun and Ragnhild Lund further argue that it is essential to link "the physical (re)construction of houses (the material dimension of homemaking) to the sense of home and belonging (the non-material and symbolic dimensions of homemaking)" (2008, 274); in this way, we can easily understand "how locally affected and displaced people reconcile their perceptions of house and home" (275), as they constitute the primary stakeholders in recovery processes. Thus, it is imperative to collect, understand, and integrate narratives and notions of home in policies and programs concerning housing and disaster.

Various studies made by Philippine and international organizations point to the fact that the Philippines is among the world's most disaster-prone countries. In fact, in the World Risk Report for 2018, the Philippines ranks third among countries with the greatest exposure to disasters. The country's geographical location makes it prone to multiple incidents of hazards such as earthquakes, typhoons, flooding, and volcanic eruptions (UNDRR 2019). Among these hazards, typhoons and floods account for over 80% of disasters experienced in the last 50 years (Jha et al. 2018). A separate study conducted by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center of the Norwegian Refugee Council found that the Philippines ranked fifth in the list of ten countries in South and Southeast Asia with the highest risk of future displacement and loss of housing due to disasters (Lee-Brago 2017). The research warns that about 720,000 people in the Philippines face the risk of disaster-induced displacement and loss of housing. Despite these data, studies on the urban poor notions of home vis-à-vis disasters have been lacking in Philippine literature. Thus, the deployment of Blunt and Dowling's (2006) critical geography of home to frame the current study provides a way to surface marginal notions of home and the narratives and experiences of precarity that accompany and shape them. Grounded insights about what home means to urban poor relocatees who are consistently

exposed to disaster are essential in evaluating and developing social housing plans, design, and policy. Additionally, such insights may be used to improve social conditions in relocation sites and inform disaster risk reduction and management plans that are implemented in these areas. By framing homemaking practices as placemaking strategies and a way of claiming a stake to the home and the city, women's reproductive work becomes a form of resistance and a means to access urban resources and alternative urban spaces.

Gathering stories of home

This research is a case study of SIKKAD-K3 and its members' notions of "home" and "disaster" in the midst of calamities, such as flooding. Building on the researcher's personal relations with SIKKAD, this research used storytelling (semi-structured interviews) as a primary data-gathering methodology. Storytelling allows the research participants to articulate their experiences in a manner and form that they are comfortable with. According to Tara Rooney, Katrina Lawlor, and Eddie Rohan (2016), stories provide a framework that researchers can use to investigate experience. They are "sense-making devices" (Bennett and Detzner 1997, as cited in Rooney, Lawlor and Rohan 2016) that "provide researchers with a framework through which they can explore and investigate the ways individuals experience the world around them" (148).

In recruiting interviewees, I employed snowball sampling, wherein referrals from key informants became my lead. SIKKAD, the grassroots peoples' organization (PO) mediated and introduced me to possible interviewees. I explained the research to each of the participants and sought their written informed consent. The prompts and questions during storytelling sessions focused on their perceived duties and responsibilities at home, their experience/s of flooding, the process of re-making their homes after flooding, and their "ideal" and "dream" homes. Thirty stories and accounts of home and disasters were gathered from seven men and 23 women (ages 22 to 58) over the course of six months; the first phase was done from August to October 2018, while the second phase of storytelling sessions was conducted from October to December 2019. The findings were validated through participant observation and key informant interviews of community members and leaders.

Most of the women participants were housewives, with the exception of six women who held odd jobs, such as part-time laundry work for their neighbors, part-time babysitting, and occasional retail reselling of food and snacks. All participants were asked to decide on what day and time would work best with their schedules. Usually, the women participants were free to accommodate me between one to four in the afternoon, as this was usually the time when their children took naps or when they had already finished their household chores. Meanwhile, the men participants were interviewed during weekends, which usually were their rest days, between one to five in the afternoon.

At the start of my fieldwork, the storytelling sessions were usually done in the respective homes of the participants. However, I realized quickly that this set-up was quite troublesome, especially to the women participants who were also mothers. It was difficult for them to actively participate in the storytelling sessions while also tending to their babies or children, cooking their lunch, and cleaning their homes all at the same time. It was not that they did not want to participate, but their reproductive duties were keeping them from answering follow-up questions or remembering certain relevant details. It was then that I asked the community leaders if I could use the housing unit that served as SIKKAD-K3's organizational headquarters to conduct the storytelling sessions. When the sessions were transferred there, the mothers became more at ease. Yet, after just two interview sessions at the new venue, I realized that still, most of the mothers had to bring along their babies and toddlers. As the topic of *bahay* (house) and *tahanan* (home) constituted our storytelling activities, the toddlers usually overheard this and they would energetically attempt to interject their own accounts and stories of home. I initially thought this set-up was disastrous—that there was no chance for a "perfect" interview to happen, given that most mothers had to bring their children along. However, I realized that the children's interjections may serve as a way to probe their mothers' notions of home in a very natural way. It was then that I started bringing coloring and drawing materials for the kids. I asked them to draw their *tahanan* and their community. Their drawings were then used by their mothers during our storytelling activities. Not only did the drawing sessions unburden the mothers from baby-sitting duties while they told their stories, it also became a prompt for them to tell stories of home that might not have been easy to tell if not for their children's drawings.

Meanwhile, scheduling interviews with men participants became a bit difficult due to the nature of their work. They were usually employed as taxi drivers, jeepney drivers, vet aides, or construction workers whose work was in the Metro, around 28 kilometers away from Phase 1K2. To save on fare, they usually stayed in their on-site living quarters and came home only once a week or once every two weeks. I felt a bit of guilt when they agreed to sit down with me, as I knew that their rest days were few and far between. But as one male respondent remarked: *"Pahinga pa rin samin ito, hindi naman madalas na may kumakausap sa amin at gustong marinig ang naiisip namin. Nakakatulong din ang pag-istorya ng aming kwento"* (This is still rest for us. It is not that frequent that people want to talk to us and want to listen to what we think. It helps us [feel better] when we tell our own story).[1]

Thematic analysis was applied to the data. Attempts were made to reach out and interview NHA officials of Rizal, but they did not respond.

Setting up home: The story of SIKKAD-K3

SIKKAD-K3 is a grassroots organization of renters, caretakers, sharers (extended families living together in one house), collectively referred to as homeless families due to their lack of tenure. SIKKAD-K3 was founded in Barangay San Isidro, Kasiglahan Village, Rodriguez Rizal in 2015, in recognition of the urban poor's right to decent housing. I met the organization's members while doing fieldwork for another research project, and found their story compelling. I then planned, with their permission, to pursue research regarding their organization's history and their members' notions of home. I wanted to inquire into what home meant to them. Aside from the sub-standard quality of housing units in state-built relocation sites (Dancel 2019; Dizon 2019), the housing units they occupied in Phase 1K2 Kasiglahan Village (Figure 1) were also constructed on a high-risk area for floods (AGHAM 2015).

Figure 1. Welcome arch of Phase 1K2. Photo by the author.

Here, I would like to take a step back and provide the context and short history of SIKKAD-K3. In August 2012, the monsoon rains (*habagat)* caused floods that ravaged an entire relocation community residing in Phase 1k2 of Kasiglahan Village. According to the residents, several people allegedly drowned in the flood, but official records from the local government unit (LGU) of Rodriguez, Rizal showed no casualty. Meanwhile, major television networks and media outfits covered this disaster. In a news video dated August 13, 2012 and uploaded by GMA Network's *News to Go* show, the news anchor enumerated six barangays that were hard hit by the *habagat*: San Jose, Rosario, San Rafael, Balite, Burgos, and San Isidro (Figure 2).
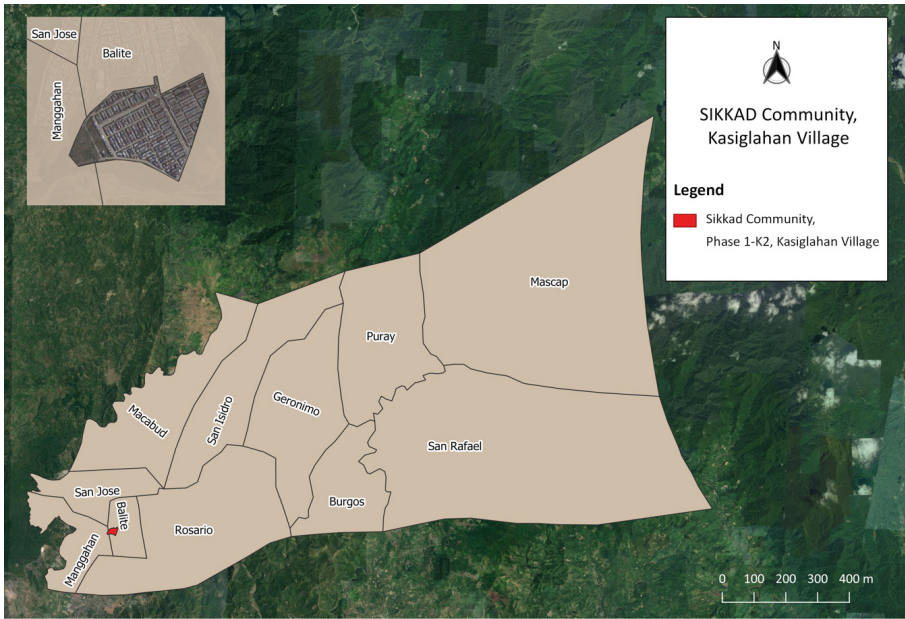
Figure 2. Map showing the location of SIKKAD's community and the barangays of Rodriguez, Rizal. (Map based on LiPAD LiDAR data courtesy of Sedric Suringa and Regimhel Dalisay.)

Janess Ellao and Ronalyn Olea of alternative news outfit Bulatlat covered the disaster and produced a special report (2012) that details a resident's experience of the flood:

> Around 6:00 a.m., her neighbor knocked on her door, saying that they need to evacuate immediately as the La Mesa dam would soon release water. A river, which stretched near their house, was reportedly where water would flow from the La Mesa dam and the nearby Wawa dam.
>
> "I just closed the door to get my children and when I opened it again, the flood water was already knee-deep," Lasala said, "The flood went immediately inside our house."
>
> We walked a little bit and it was already knee-deep. We walked a little bit more and it was waist-deep. That was how fast the water rose," Lasala narrated.

Figure 3. YouScooper Vincent Manchus's photo of Montalban during Typhoon Ondoy in 2009. See https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/hashtag/content/288320/top-12-youscoop-scoops-of-2012/story/.

The disastrous event traumatized the original residents and beneficiaries of the housing units, forcing them to abandon their units in search of safer homes (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 4. Housing units in Phase 1K2 after the 2012 monsoon rains. Photo from SIKKAD-K3.

It was only after the 2012 flooding that the NHA realized that it had built the entire village in a flood-prone area (Figure 5), forcing the Rodriguez City Council to declare the entire Phase as a danger-zone. According to a Structural Integrity and Flood Risk report conducted by Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM) in 2015:

> … the houses built for the communities did not have the adequate structural elements, which are required by the National Structural Code of the Philippines (NSCP), such as concrete reinforced columns needed to keep houses sturdy against earthquake and wind loads. Ground settlement can be seen everywhere. Furthermore, the spacing of the rebar reinforcements of the concrete hollow blocks did not match those required of the NSC. Moreover, the elevation of the row houses with respect to the nearby river is suspected to be inadequate for flood protection. Verification should be made whether the houses were designed, with consideration to the possible flood level under a 20-year return period.
>
> The technical team of AGHAM believes that the design and construction materials of the homes that shelter over a hundred impoverished Filipinos might not withstand strong storms and earthquakes (This can be verified if the occupants can provide a complete structural plan used in the project that can be shared to AGHAM technical team for evaluation). Therefore, the constructed houses have a high probability of jeopardizing the lives of the people living in Kasiglahan in the event of a strong earthquake. Drastic engineering solutions should be done as soon as possible to correct and retrofit the inadequate structural and hydraulic concerns before all forms of natural disasters. (2)
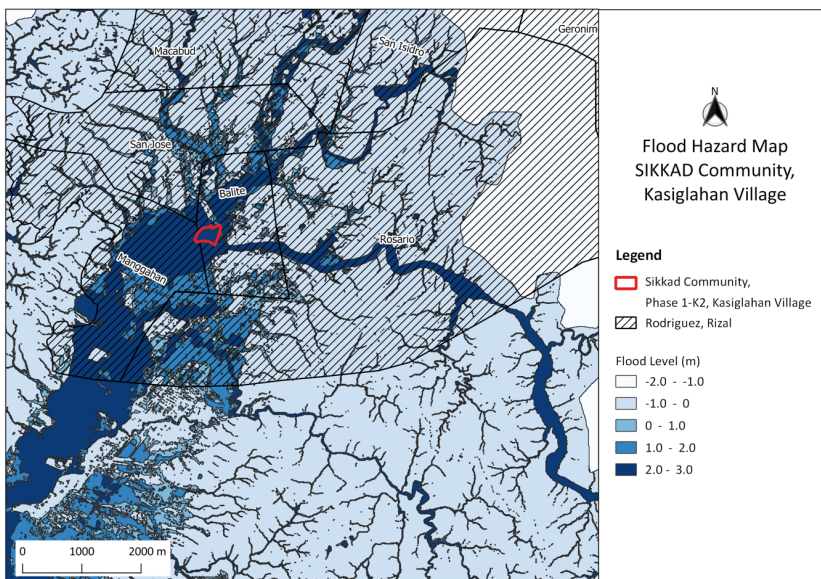
Figure 5. Flood hazard map of Rodriguez, Rizal. Map indicates that Phase 1-K2 of Kasiglahan Village is prone to being submerged in flood water measuring approximately 2 to 3 meters high. (Map based on LiPAD LiDAR data courtesy of Sedric Suringa and Regimhel Dalisay.)

Soon after, majority of the housing units in Phase 1K2 were left idle. When news of these idle housing units reached them in 2016, SIKKAD-K3 held a series of *konsultahang bayan* (community consultations) among its members. They also started requesting for dialogues with the LGU of Rodriguez and the provincial office of the NHA to lobby for the idle housing units in Phase 1K2 to be awarded to them. For SIKKAD, it was unjust that they remained as renters in Kasiglahan Village and across Rodriguez, Rizal and without their own housing units while 1,450 housing units in 1K2 were *tiwangwang* (left idle). The series of dialogues with the mayor of Rodriguez dragged on until they decided to camp out in front of the municipal hall from November 29 to 30, 2016. When they told the Mayor of their plans to occupy the idle units, he told them, "*Bahala kayo kung papasukin niyo 'yan, basta huwag niyo akong sisisihin anuman ang mangyari*" (It's your call; if you occupy the idle units, I cannot be held accountable if anything happens to you) (SIKKAD-K3 2017). On December 1, 2016, they held a protest caravan and marched to Phase 1K2. They quickly set up a *kubol* (booth/gate) at the entrance of the area to prevent the security agents of San Jose Builders, NHA's contracted developer, from going inside and preventing them from carrying out their plan of occupying the idle housing units. Meanwhile, the other members cleaned the entire community which they described as *matalahib at maputik* (bushy and muddy).

> *Ang kaisahan ay mag-babayanihan kaming lahat sa paglilinis; wala munang aangkin ng unit. Sobrang talahib at damo po ng buong lugar dahil limang taong itong tiwangwang, kaya walang ibang ginawa ang mga tao kundi maglinis, at ang lahat ng staff ay mag-mapping sa lugar para sa bilang ng unit. Alinsabay nito ang pagdagsa ng mga taong gusto ring magkabahay, pinaunawa namin na dapat ay ipakita nila ang kanilang sakripisyo sa pamamagitan ng pag-duty araw-gabi sa boom/gate namin, dahil walang alisan ang mga tao doon, puno ng tao at boom, hindi po namin akalain na lolobo kami ng ganoon kalaki.*

> We were set on helping each other on the clearing on Phase 1K2. It was very grassy at the time of occupation because it has been five years since people lived here. We did nothing but clean the entire place, all SIKKAD's staff members mapped the entire area to count the number of units. Meanwhile, families who heard about the occupation fell in line in front of the gate. We explained to them that if they want a unit, they must sacrifice and commit to doing marshaling duties in our gate; SIKKAD members need to guard the gate 24/7, and the people kept coming, we did not realize that our membership will increase to such a big number. (SIKKAD-K3 2017)

From then on, the gate that they set up at the entrance of the community had been referred to by the locals as the *boom*, a customized hut where people gather to monitor and regulate entry to their community (Figure 6). In the early days, the boom functioned as a place where people who hear of SIKKAD's occupation and desire of having their own housing unit go. SIKKAD required these walk-in

families to register in the waitlist and to prove their willingness to own a home by going on-duty and guarding the boom as marshals. They were also invited to attend educational discussions that tackled the right to housing and the root cause of homelessness, lessons which SIKKAD believes may help the urban poor realize their conditions better and encourage them to understand why it is important to safeguard their rights. The marshaling system has been functioning since 2016, and is generally aimed at preventing theft, drugs, or the forced entry of state forces, NHA and LGU security officials in their community. All families who have been issued units by SIKKAD are required to fulfill a marshaling duty at least once a week.
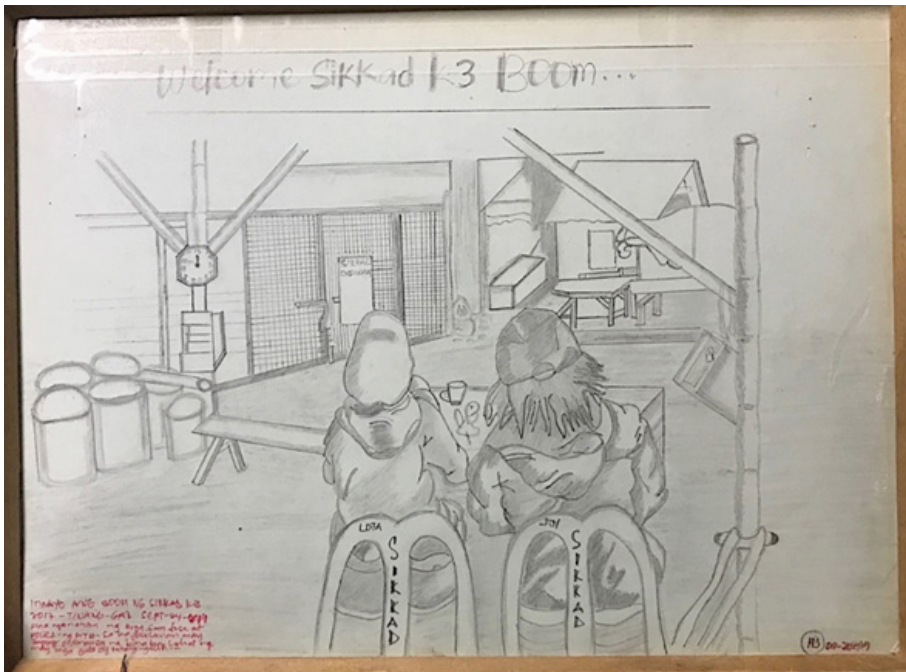

Figure 6. A drawing of the boom at the entrance of SIKKAD's community on September 2019, as depicted by a SIKKAD officer (identity withheld for safety reasons). She drew this a week after its dismantling, as ordered by the Department of Interior and Local Government through Memorandum Circular No. 2019-167 (in accordance with President Duterte's directives to clear roads from illegal structures and obstructions).

SIKKAD was able to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission in 2017. They were duly recognized as a grassroots organization by Barangay San Jose and the Rodriguez Municipal Hall. Nevertheless, there were tense encounters and dialogues due to their "informal" occupancy status, because according to SIKKAD, the LGU initially wanted nothing to do with them. Later on, however, it seemed as if both the barangay and the LGU eventually decided to give SIKKAD the authority to organize and handle community affairs themselves. At present, an estimated 3,000 families reside in Phase 1K2. To efficiently manage this enormous

population, SIKKAD grouped the units into five housing blocks, which are further broken down into 42 housing clusters, comprised of 12–16 houses each. Each block and cluster has a duly elected leader, who is usually a mother (only three out of the 42 cluster leaders are male). At any one time, each block and cluster must have a designated marshal. The marshal enforces curfew and sees to it that there will be no drinking on the streets. They also log any unusual activities or people on their notebooks and report these to SIKKAD officers accordingly. Officers call a general assembly of leaders at least once a month. Most conflicts in the community are also resolved at the cluster-level, or, if requiring escalation, are brought to the SIKKAD headquarters for resolution. SIKKAD-K3 developed its Constitution and by-laws that all members must abide by:

> *Ang pagkakaroon ng batas at patakaran na ito ay upang mapangalagaan at pagyamanin ang ating mga karapatan na magkaroon ng bahay na matatawag nating sarili, bilang saligan ng isang mapayapang pamilya na nagmamahalan at nagkakaunawaan.*

> Our rules and policies were drafted to care for and safeguard our right to housing, as a foundation of a peaceful family filled with love and understanding. (SIKKAD-K3 2016)

SIKKAD's "*Mga Batas at Patakaran sa Loob ng Inokupahang Bahay at mga Aksyong Pandisiplina*" outlines their other rules and policy on housing (Figure 7). SIKKAD vehemently prohibits the selling, renting out, and mortgaging of housing units (which seems to be a regular practice in relocation sites in Rodriguez), the non-occupancy by original SIKKAD awardees, and the hiring of a caretaker. The only people allowed to live in a unit are the parents or children of the SIKKAD unit awardee. As mentioned earlier, one requirement in obtaining and maintaining a housing unit in Phase 1K2 is the sustained marshaling duty of at least one person per family at least once a week. SIKKAD block and cluster leaders monitor any violations regularly. Families or individuals caught by their cluster or block leaders violating any of SIKKAD rules are referred to the officers for questioning. The SIKKAD officers usually send the families/individuals letters regarding their case, and they usually invite them to their headquarters for a dialogue.

San Isidro, Kasiglahan Kapatiran at Damayan para sa Kabuhayan , Katarungan at Kapayapaan
8C 1K2 Kasiglahan Village, Barangay San Jose, Rodriguez Rizal
Sec Reg. CN-201732740

MGA BATAS AT PATAKARAN SA LOOB NG INOKUPANG PABAHAY AT MGA AKSYON PANDISIPLINA SA SINO MANG LALABAG SA MGA ITO AT LAYUNIN NITO.

MAHIGPIT NA IPINAGBABAWAL ANG MGA SUMUSUNOD:

1. MAGBENTA/ PAGBEBENTA NG UNIT/ BAHAY
2. PAGSASANLA/ PRENDA NG UNIT/ BAHAY
3. PAGPAPAUPA/ RENTA NG UNIT/ BAHAY
4. PAGPAPATIRA O PAGKUHA NG CARE TAKER (Note: ang pwede lang na tumira ay magulang at anak)
5. PAGLILIWAT O PAGSASALIN NG KARAPATAN SA UNIT/ BAHAY (Note: maliban sa magulang o anak na may sarili nang pamilya subalit dapat ipagbigay alam sa pamunuan ng SIKKAD-K3)

6. ANG PAKIKIPAGKASUNDO SA SINUMANG INDIBIDWAL NA MAKIPAGKASUNDO PARA SA PAGPAPASAULI/ PAGPAPABAYAD NG NAGASTOS SA UNIT KUNG HINDI NA NILA MATITIRHAN SA ANUMANG KADAHILANAN NA HINDI NAKIKIPAG-UGNAYAN SA PAMUNUAN NG SIKKAD-K3 AY HINDI KIKILALANIN.

7. PAMUMUNO / PANGUNGUNA NG ANTI-SOSYAL NA GAWAIN TULAD NG MGA SUMUSUNOD:
   A. PAGGAMIT AT PAGBEBENTA NG ILIGAL NA DROGA
   B. PAGPAPASUGAL (TUPADA/ SABONG , SAKLA , BARAHA, MAJONG, KARA KRUS AT IBA PANG KAPARES NITO)
   C. PAG-IINOM AT PAGBEBENTA NG ALAK SA MGA TINDAHAN
   D. PAGBEBENTA SA ANYO NG SEXUAL NA KATANGIAN O PROSTITUSYON
   E. PAGBUBUGAW/PANG-UUPAT

8. PAGPAPAGAMIT NG UNIT/ BAHAY SA ANTI-SOSYAL NA GAWAIN TULAD NG SUMUSUNOD:
   A. DROGA
   B. ALAK
   C. SUGAL
   D. SEXUAL

Figure 7. First page of SIKKAD's rules and policies on housing.

SIKKAD leaders and officers mentioned repeatedly that it was through their persistence that the local city council was convinced to lift the danger zone proclamation—the only requisite that NHA asked before officially awarding the units to SIKKAD. As of time of writing, the document lifting the danger-zone status of Phase 1k2 lacks only the Rodriguez mayor's signature.

SIKKAD-K3's struggle in asserting its members right to housing and its occupation of idle housing units is a unique phenomenon in the Philippines—it is one of the few organized and large-scale attempts by the urban poor to occupy state-owned housing units in the country. Most scholarly work and online articles that tackle the occupation movements in the Philippines in recent times usually focus on the case of tenant farmers occupying haciendas in rural areas (Kerkvliet 2008)

or that of Occupy Bulacan, another occupation movement led by the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY), a national alliance of urban poor Filipinos. Occupy Bulacan succeeded in taking over 5,300 socialized housing units originally built for the military and police personnel in Pandi, Bulacan in March 2017 (Dizon 2019). Unlike the Occupy Bulacan movement, which gained traction on social media enough to warrant a threat from President Duterte (Placido 2017), the Occupy movement of SIKKAD-K3 in 2016 did not make it to the news, and therefore to national consciousness. Even then, SIKKAD's case remains important in charting urban poor movements in the Philippines. Despite the persistent show of neglect by the local government, which is a major factor that may curtail or obstruct their right to the city, they struggle to make claims to the city through various means. SIKKAD continues to assert their right to housing and to a home through mass campaigns and dialogues with local government officials. Amid the risk of exposure to disaster and their very limited resources, they persist in their homemaking practices and grapple to provide their families a stable, decent home. They spend time and energy to resolve social conflicts among community members and to maintain cleanliness in the neighborhood. They ensure that Phase 1K2 is a safe and livable community that their members can thrive in. These efforts can be seen as the women's acts of resistance against the state that wants them out of Phase 1K2, and a way to make a claim to the city. As Muñoz (2017) points out, the urban poor's precarious conditions may still offer them some opportunities to construct alternative opportunities and spaces for themselves and their families. However, this is not enough to "resolve the precarity that characterizes their conditions," because when access to housing and the ability to create stable homes are denied, the "urban poor's ability to participate actively in the construction and development of the city are also obstructed" (5).

Notions of disaster and women-led approaches to disaster mitigation

> "*Mas malaking sakuna naman kung wala kaming matirhan*!" (It would be a much bigger disaster if we were to become homeless!) - *Nanay* Rits

Since the entirety of Phase 1K2 of Kasiglahan Village was declared as a danger zone, the LGU was not too keen on having SIKKAD members live in the area, for fear that they might be held accountable for any casualties. However, SIKKAD insisted on staying, asserting their right to housing. According to them, staying homeless while hundreds of housing units were left unoccupied and idle is a much bigger disaster. They understood the trade-off: the LGU must not and cannot be held responsible for any untoward incidents in their community in the event of a disaster, and so they knew that they must exert effort in developing an effective disaster mitigation plan grounded on their experiences and available resources— and they did. They have also organized on an annual basis an information drive and

disaster preparation orientation, which are attended by their members' families. All these, despite the initial lack of support from the LGU.

In SIKKAD's community, mothers usually take charge, as their husbands usually go to and stay in the city to work. The marshaling system, in which women members are assigned to patrol housing clusters, and which is developed to ensure security from external threats, carries over to the community's organic disaster mitigation plan and is activated during threats of disasters. As soon as the mothers hear news of an incoming typhoon from relatives who live in Metro Manila, an ingenious process unfolds: the designated marshals start going around the community to alert the families, while two to three marshals stand guard and start monitoring the water level of the nearby river. As soon as the water reaches knee-level, all cluster leaders mobilize the families to start evacuating. Their housing unit's main electric switch is turned off and they padlock their homes to prevent fire and theft. On top of their priority list for evacuation are senior citizens, people with disabilities, and children. During evacuation, there are also marshals assigned to assist the families to get to evacuation areas through predetermined shallow routes. They prepare bamboo trunks tied one after the other in case there are still people left behind. Marshals ride on makeshift rafts and go around the community to ensure everyone has evacuated. After the flood has subsided, the community engages in *bayanihan*, or a community effort to clean, with some homes functioning as daycare centers for children so their mothers can join the clean-up activity.

In all these disaster-related activities and efforts, mothers have a more pronounced and magnified role and tend to bear most of the responsibilities; this can be tied to their socially sanctioned gender role as "carers" and homemakers. Mothers take the lead in the task of marshaling, securing their own homes and those of their neighbors, ensuring the welfare of the evacuees, and distributing aid. Their male partners, upon hearing from the women regarding the flood situation in the community, try to immediately head back home from their workplaces in the city. After a disaster event and while the women stay in the elementary school nearby (which functions as the evacuation center), the men go to check on and secure their homes and belongings. The men also usually assist in the cleaning of the community on the first few days, but they immediately return to work at the soonest time possible to ensure family income amidst recovery. The women of SIKKAD then help one another in cleaning and restoring their community.

In spite of the lack of resources and formal training, their local disaster plan seems to work quite well. In their three-year stay in the area, no casualties have been reported. In fact, in 2019 during the monsoon rains, they successfully evacuated their community even before barangay assistance came. However, theirs is a disaster management plan and paradigm that is not quite the norm in this country. In fact, their notions and understanding of why disasters occur stand in contrast with the notion and understanding of their very own barangay officials. My interviews with two officials of Barangay San Jose suggest that the

Barangay Disaster Risk and Reduction Council believes that disasters are natural and unexpected events that result in a disruption of everyday activities. To them, the cause of flooding in Kasiglahan Village is primarily the big volume of water brought about by the rains and poor drainage systems. Both the interviews and reviews of their disaster-related documents highlight the fact that the ultimate goals of the Barangay disaster officials are to have zero casualty, to efficiently assess losses and damage, and to go "back to normal" as soon as the disaster episode is through. In comparison, SIKKAD offers a very different take: to them, disasters are not natural, but instead, are primarily man-made. They recognize that their socio-economic vulnerability contributes to the heightened impact of disasters. The community members are quick to stress that the units should not have been built on a flood plain in the first place. They blame the expanding quarrying and logging activities in their province as the cause of the flooding in the past years. Ultimately, to them, the goal is not just to have zero casualty after the disaster episode, but to solve the root causes of disaster and their vulnerability: poverty and the lack of social support.

Despite a shared vocabulary of disaster risk, the differing notions and experiences of reality on the ground make for very different methods and responses between grassroots organizations and state institutions. Greg Bankoff and Dorothea Hillhorst (2009), in their study on the politics of risk in disaster management, argue that "approaches to disaster are not just a function of people's perceptions of disaster risk but also of their notions of the prevailing social order and social relations" (3). We can see this play out in the case of SIKKAD and the LGU of Rizal.

Notions of "home"

For the SIKKAD members I interviewed, notions of "home" can be categorized into four themes: home as owned, home as a temporal imaginary, home as a material space claimed through homemaking (for women) or made through investments and maintenance (for men), and home as multi-scalar and occurring at the scale of the community.

Majority of the 18 women whom I interviewed believe that legal ownership is highly important when it comes to their notion of home; they feel that their housing units cannot officially be a "home" if they have no legal ownership or title. As the units have yet to be formally awarded to them, their sense of home in Kasiglahan Village is rather still limited. This echoes Blunt and Dowling's (2006) chapter on home economies and identities, in which they argue that:

> Ownership is most closely identified with dominant notions of home. Notably, ownership is termed 'home ownership' rather than 'house ownership', signalling that ownership is synonymous with home. Those buying a house are presumed to be properly capable of making home, of creating a place that is secure, comfortable and welcoming. (93)

This limited notion of home is further complicated by the bouts of flooding during the monsoon season. The floods ravage their entire community, leaving it muddied and despoiled, and this constant rupture contributes negatively to their sense of "home," which they believe must also be clean and safe from harm. When asked about what and how they feel toward their flooded house or *nabahang bahay*, the answers are emotions that range from feelings of loss, desperation, to fear and anxiety. I then asked them about how a space like theirs can turn into a home. Twenty of the women participants mentioned the words *papagandahin* (beautifying, designing) and *aayusin* (fixing) a couple of times, which is synonymous to what Blunt and Dowling (2006) refer to as "homemaking," or the cultivation of the home. For the women interviewees, homemaking allows them to have a sense of control over their potentially alienating environment, even though this sense of control may be limited due to their conditions. Homemaking also allows them to personalize their homes and, therefore, establish identity. In my visits to their homes, a recurring number of items were present. In all the 24 housing units I was able to visit, 15 had religious (Catholic) altars adorned with either a small cross, rosaries, a small statue of the *Sto. Niño*, or a photo of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In addition, 10 of the 24 housing units had planted trees or plants in their tiny lawns, while 11 out of the 24 housing units had a make-shift fence in front of their house (See Figure 8 for an example). A participant I visited in 2018 hung colorful curtains on windowless walls, saying "*Syempre dapat maganda pa rin ang bahay, maaliwalas tignan. Pero ito lang ang kaya ko, kahit papaano nabuhay ang bahay*" (Of course, the house must still be beautiful and must look pleasant. This curtain is all I can afford, but at least it enlivens the house). Additionally, the material geography of their housing units also showcased their family-centeredness; the women's use of family photographs plastered on the cracked walls of the units created a "sense of 'homeliness'" (Rose 2003) and extended their domestic space beyond the home and toward their family members living elsewhere. As one participant shared: "'*Di man kami madalas nagkikita ng mga kapatid ko, masaya sa pakiramdam na andito pa rin sila sa tabi ko, kahit sa picture lang*" (Even if I do not see my siblings too often, I feel happy that they still seem to be beside me, even if it's just through this picture).

Figure 8. Nanay Eve's home is on the left, with a makeshift fence made of wood. Photo by the author.

Due in part to their lack of tenure and the annual flooding, all 23 women participants refused to make big investments and undertake serious homemaking activities, such as painting their walls, renovating, and overhauling their units, or erecting permanent and durable fences around their homes. According to them, these renovations would not only be expensive but would also be useless come typhoon season. In the middle of our sessions, I realized that when describing their notions of home, the women tended to describe a home that did not seem to resemble their current housing units. As their kids usually drew while the storytelling sessions were on-going, I also invited the women to draw their ideal homes, and 10 of them accepted the invitation. In the following selected drawings (Figures 9.1 and 9.2), we can see that not only were the houses more spacious that the usual NHA housing unit, but they were also surrounded by trees and plants, more colorful and personalized, and had access to social services, such as schools, health clinics, hospitals, churches, and the market. These imaginaries of home demonstrate the multi-scalar characteristic of a home: for a house to be a home, it must also be near social services and various forms of social support. Although there are a few social service facilities near Phase 1K2, such as an elementary and high school building, as well as a health center, access to these facilities remain difficult for SIKKAD members, as not everyone can afford the full cost of schooling and the cost of prescription medicine after a check-up. Nevertheless, the women participants affirmed that proximity to accessible social services contributes to a feeling of "homeliness" and safety. Thus, just as Easthope (2004) and Blunt and Dowling (2006) pointed out, the home is not just a structure, but a node in

networks of social relations occurring at different scales.

A

B

Figure 9.1: Drawings of the ideal homes of some SIKKAD Members: A – Nanay Eve's ideal home; B – Nanay Tina's ideal home.

C

D

Figure 9.2: Drawings of the ideal homes of some SIKKAD Members: C – Nanay Leti's ideal home;
D – Nanay Josie's ideal home.

The setting of these drawings of homes is still Phase 1K2, but each home looked more spacious and, according to them, more livable ("*mas matitirhan*") and come with housing titles. It can be noted that NHA housing units were once likened by one Congress representative as "coops for pigeons" (Herrera 2016), as they usually measure only 22 sqm in size. All the women participants emphasized that they would like to have a home with more partitions, not necessarily a bigger space. It was important for the mothers, especially those who had daughters, to have at least one room for their children. According to them, the extra room or partition may serve as additional protection for their children from attempts or cases of harassment or abuse by strangers, neighbors, or even extended family who intermittently stay with them. This is reflected in the drawings of Nanay Josie, Nanay Tina, and Nanay Eve, where there is great emphasis on having a bigger space inside the house so that a partition or an extra room can be placed. Notably, housing units built by the NHA usually have no partitions.

Meanwhile, for the men respondents, who were also fathers, the home symbolized their breadwinning and financial responsibility. Five of them refer to the home as a physical space where they can go to relax and unwind, where they witness their children grow up, where their wives take care of their children, and where they can enjoy the fruits of their labor, such as household appliances. Homemaking, to them, is accomplished through an investment in and accumulation of household appliances or *"pagpupundar."* In fact, one participant told me that "*kapag namimiss ko ang pamilya ko at hindi pa ako makauwi, iniisip ko na lang, at least medyo okay sila dito, may electric fan naman silang bili ko at may nahihigaan naman na hindi sahig*" (When I miss my family and I can not go home yet, I just think to myself, at least they are relatively okay in the house, they have an electric fan that I bought and a mattress so that they do not need to lie on the floor). Here, we can underscore the stereotype and notion of Filipino men as the primary member in charge of supporting the economic needs of the family. When asked about the distance of the relocation site to their workplace in the city, four of the seven men I interviewed said they were satisfied with their housing unit's location, as the distance from the city gives them a semblance of peace and quiet. They, however, complain about the traffic in major highways and the high ticket price of the Metro Rail Transit.

The male participants also emphasized their perceived role in their homes. According to Tatay Nardy: "*Nagiging tahanan kapag ginagampanan mo ang kailangan mo gawin sa bahay para payapa, para sa akin, ang tatay dapat inaayos ang bahay. Dapat kapag may sira, rekta ayos agad, para hindi maging malaking abala*" (A house becomes a home when you fulfill your role, so you can have peace in the home. For me, a father must fix the house. If there is something that needs fixing, you should fix it as soon as possible, so it will not get worse). Four out of the six men participants believe that men should be in charge of maintaining their housing units. They must ensure that locks are functioning, and that their very few appliances are working well. Thus, maintaining and fixing the house makes their unit homely.

Meanwhile, both women and men have expressed a shared appreciation of how SIKKAD and the entire Phase 1K2 community contribute greatly to their family life. SIKKAD engages all families to help in community-based activities and efforts. As described earlier, the community is divided into housing clusters, where each cluster has a leader and assistant leader. The cluster leader ensures that the members of her clusters attend weekly meetings, join community clean-up efforts, and do not engage in drug-dealing and drug-using practices. They also help gather resources for the poorer families, mobilizing members to do *ambagan* (chipping in) of either food or money to hand over to families. In fact, when asked who mothers go to when they need to borrow money, they cite their cluster leaders or assistant leaders as people they trust the most to lend them. Through the organization's engagement, the notion of home is stretched—from the small and individual housing unit, it leaps to the scale of the entire neighborhood.

This is not to say that life in SIKKAD's community is always pleasant. There were two instances during my fieldwork when my storytelling sessions needed to be postponed because SIKKAD's office was used for a meeting to resolve a problem between two neighbors that stemmed from *chismis* (gossip). In most days, however, most mothers take turns in caring for each other's children when they can, making mothering a community-based activity as well. Citing Dyck (1990), Blunt and Dowling (2006) state that neighborhood-based mothering stretches the home, since the "sharing of domestic resources such as childcare can transform the street into a home as well as creating safer neighbourhoods for children and less work for women" (112).

SIKKAD's sense of community can be demonstrated during Christmas time. As early as October, clusters are mobilized to set up a make-shift Christmas tree using recycled materials and found items. In a community-wide Christmas party held every December, a jury will give special prizes to the cluster who has the most creative tree (Figure 10). I assumed women were at the helm of this activity, but it was in fact the men who built the foundations for these Christmas trees: *"Hindi kami laging andito pero talagang tutulong kami sa ganung pag-set-up, nakakatuwa rin na nagtutulong-tulong sa pagtayo, bata man o matanda, andun at nakapaikot sa Christmas tree"* (We men are not always home, but we make sure to help set up the trees. It makes us feel great that we are able to help put up the trees, young or old, you can find us near the tree, ready to help).

In these examples, the notion of home as multi-scalar can also be observed. In SIKKAD's community, the home transcends the boundaries of the house and the social organization of family. Home, instead of being a bounded locality, becomes an intersection of social relationships, like that of SIKKAD mothers with their neighbors, as well as their relationship to their environment.

Figure 10. Christmas trees built by SIKKAD community members from recycled materials.
Photos by the author.

Conclusion

Despite the primacy of "place" as one of the most important defining criteria of cultures, the nature of the relationship of a particular group to places it inhabits or frequents remains largely unexamined (Hammond 2004). Rakoff, in his 1977 study on the ideological underpinnings of the meanings that Americans attach to houses, states that: "to understand fully the impact of political-economic institutions, including the state, on people's lives, we must study the socially constituted, subjectively experienced knowledge that people have of those institutions and their products" (87–88). Thus, interrogating notions of home, especially those of urban poor relocatees, is important in building a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of what observers say is a willfully neglected sector of Philippine society (Ballesteros 2010; Soriano 2017).

As opposed to a house, home is not just a physical structure—it is an idea, an imaginary imbued with feelings, and a site of overlapping cultural meanings (Blunt and Dowling 2006). We must, therefore, consider the complexity of "home" as a concept when we talk about the conditions of the urban poor and their right to housing. This is because what "home" might mean to middle class individuals can be entirely different compared to what it might mean to the urban poor. As demonstrated earlier, home to SIKKAD members is an imaginary and aspiration, as much as it is a material space that they consciously infuse with meaning and value through processes, such as homemaking, home renovation, or home maintenance. Their notions of home are continuously constructed and shaped by their precarity, natural environment, and gender. To the women, the home is a space of work, where they care for their children, tend to house chores, and make

their homes homelier through personalization and design. Thus, home is central to their identity as homemakers and mothers. Meanwhile, the men associate home with notions of security, provision, and the upkeep and maintenance of the house, all of which relate to their socially constructed gender role as the family's breadwinner and provider. We see in these notions of home the reproduction of the gendered division of labor, where women take primary responsibility in the day-to-day supervision of the home, and the men typically secure the house and provide for the family economically.

This gendered division of labor extends to disaster events. The care work needed in times of disaster, such as securing the home, marshaling the community members to safety, ensuring their welfare in the evacuation site, and distributing aid, are done by the women members of SIKKAD. When asked about their thoughts about the imbalance of roles between men and women during times of disaster, a woman participant states: "*Ganun talaga, ang nanay ang kailangan gumampan ng gawain lalo pagdating sa bahay. Ang tatay dapat ang mag-aasikaso na may makain, lalo kung matagal ang dating ng relief, siya dapat ang maghanap ng pera*" (That is how it is, the mother should do activities related to the home. The father should ensure that his family has food to eat, especially when relief takes a long time; he should find money for the family). Thus, not only are gender roles produced and reproduced in the home (Muñoz 2017), but are also performed and reinforced in times of disaster.

The men and women participants have emphasized how the entire community of Phase 1K2 plays an immense role in what home means to them. Activities like community-based mothering and sharing of chores make lighter the care work of individual families, while setting up community Christmas trees cultivates their sense of community and belonging. Meanwhile, the women participants—in the drawings of their ideal homes—have included not just houses but also facilities for social services, such as health centers, hospitals, and schools, among others. In this regard, their imaginaries and notions of home is multi-scalar, occurring through other and bigger scales than their home. In the case of SIKKAD, home occurs through and exists on the scale of the community. Home, therefore, transcends the boundaries of their housing units and the members of their families. Their sense of community, safety, and solidarity—gained from being part of SIKKAD—balances out the anxieties concerning their lack of tenure and the annual flooding. Being part of a collective that was knowledgeable and ready to assert their right to housing was essential for them to hold their ground and stay in place.

Amid the precarity and the persistent show of neglect of the local government, the determination of SIKKAD women to continuously assert their right to housing while also engaging in homemaking practices to create livable, decent homes for their families and a safe community for their neighbors can be seen as an act of resistance and a distinct way to make a claim to the city. Despite their lack of resources, they work to create opportunities and spaces for themselves and their

families. However, their efforts may not be enough to resolve their precarious conditions. Muñoz (2017) asserts that when the urban poor's access to housing and opportunities to make livable, stable homes are denied or limited, their ability to participate actively in creating and developing the city is impeded. Thus, as demonstrated in the case of SIKKAD, the struggle of urban poor relocatees to assert their right to the city begins at home.

In recognizing the urban poor's "right to a home," we must pay close attention to their notions, aspirations, and imaginaries of home and how these inform their everyday homemaking practices. These practices may be seen as organic strategies of the urban poor to access urban resources and appropriate urban spaces according to their needs and aspirations, thereby becoming a way by which to assert their right to the city.

The multi-scalarity of the urban poor's notions of home must also be examined. Literature has told us that just the mere provision of a housing unit may not be enough for urban poor families evicted from the Metro—these housing units must be livable, affordable, and decent; must have affordable electricity and clean water; and must have access to social services, such as schools and health clinics, among others. These elements constitute the very basic requirements for the realization of the right to a home.

Additionally, we must pay attention to the way the urban poor define and perceive disasters, because just like notions of "home," concepts of disaster are heavily influenced by precarity, gender, concepts of environmental or social justice, and awareness of surroundings, among others. In SIKKAD's case, the perspectives of the women/mothers are fundamental in the development of a disaster preparedness and response plan that is resource-efficient, inclusive, and is alert to the needs of vulnerable individuals. Disaster programs can do well to create opportunities where urban poor women can freely share their own understandings of disaster, risk, vulnerabilities, and hazards that disaster-related agencies can consider in their respective plans. Additionally, SIKKAD, in its acknowledgment of the social dimension of disasters and their members' vulnerabilities, consistently engages in dialogues with the local government so that the latter may help improve the drainage infrastructures in their community, address the quarrying activities nearby, and make accountable the NHA for building social housing on flood-prone sites.

SIKKAD's existence is proof that even amid precarity, the urban poor are routinely and creatively making alternative spaces in the city, while negotiating and engaging with the state and accessing what little resources they can claim to build a life for themselves. Furthermore, their experiences confirm that disaster preparedness and response plans work best when designed, steered, and managed primarily by the communities themselves.

Acknowledgments

Endnote

[1]   All translations are by the author.

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