

DISASTER-RELATED DISPLACEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Political and economic factors as drivers of
displacement risk

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Abstract

Every year that passes, it is increasingly clear that the number of natural disasters is rising worldwide. Very often, when a natural hazard strikes a vulnerable community, it transforms from a potential harmful event into a disaster that has catastrophic social and economic consequences. Disasters can be seen as one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development and poverty eradication as they can drive people into poverty and can reverse the development gains built up over decades. Together with the devastation of lives, livelihoods and economic loss, displacement is one of the major outcomes of disasters. In the aftermath of a disaster, in most cases, part of the affected communities are forced to leave their homes and livelihoods to search for better living conditions. Among all the possible countries that could have been studied for their high propensity to suffer a disaster, the Philippines has been chosen to be the case study of this thesis. The Philippines is regarded to be one of the most disaster prone countries in the world, in fact every year the country suffers multiple sorts of disasters including storms, floods, earthquakes, drought, and volcanic eruptions that cause a large number of casualties and social setbacks. Because of the high number of hazards that hits the archipelago, very often, the inhabitants also suffers extensive displacement. This thesis sets out to investigate how displacement risk is constructed in the country and in particular this research is focused on giving an answer to “**Why are the Filipinos still not able to adequately withstand natural disasters and avoid frequent displacements?**”. As Socio-economic aspects and the incidence of poverty and inequalities are determinant factors that increase the chances of displacement, the reasons behind a high number of people forced to flee is to be understood in the context of political and economic systems. Therefore to give an answer to this question, the inquiry focuses on two of the possible factors that can increase the level of vulnerability of Filipinos, namely the free-market-oriented economic policies implemented following the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and the influence of the political landscape in the process of deforestation. The focus on deforestation, and in particular on illegal logging, is very relevant because of the strong correlation between the misuse of the environment and disaster risk. By employing two theories, Neoliberalism and Elite Theory, it has been possible to analyze the consequences of the economic reforms and the power relations in the logging industry. It was found that SAPs, negatively affected the vulnerability of the poorest strata of the Philippine by reducing their resources and assets, and thus preventing them to build efficient coping capacities to withstand disasters. Moreover, the political landscape of the country has increased the vulnerability of the population by promoting deforestation and by implementing logging bans

without providing alternative livelihoods. All in all, a large part of the Philippine population is unable to adequately withstand natural disasters and avoid frequent displacement because SAPs and the political landscape contributed in several ways to reduce their coping capacities and to increase their vulnerability to hazards.

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List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AOA	Agreement on Agriculture
ASEAN	Association of the South East Asian Nations
CRED	Center for research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
DENR	Department of Environmental and Natural Resources
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
E.O.	Executive Order
GAR	Global Assessment Report
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LGUs	Local Government Units
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIAS	Nordic Institute of Asian Studies
NIC	Newly Industrialized Country
NSCB	National Statistical Coordination Board

NSMNP	Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park
NTFP	Fuelwood and non-Timber Forest Products
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
SAL	Structural Adjustment Loan
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
TLA	Timber License Agreements
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNU-EHS	United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human security
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1 Introduction

Often, in the aftermath of a disaster, newspapers and news on television focus mainly on direct damages such as the number of casualties, the number of persons injured and the devastation in terms of economic losses. Not much attention is given to another important outcome of disasters: the survivors. After few weeks, when the catastrophe is no longer in the news and it is replaced by other events that interest more the readers and the viewers, the population affected by calamities are almost forgotten by both the public and the media. Disasters, destroying houses, livelihoods and infrastructures, displace people and force them to search for better living conditions. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) defines displacement in the context of disasters as:

All forced population movements resulting from the immediate threat or actual impacts of a disaster situation regardless of the length of time displaced, distance moved from place of origin and subsequent patterns of movement, including back in the place of origin or re-settlement elsewhere (Ginnetti, 2015, p. 8).

Forced migrants can be divided into two broad categories: internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Both of them share the common denominator that they refer to people forced to leave their home because they felt that their life was in danger, but IDPs, unlike refugees, remain within the country of origin. (Mooney, 2007, pp. 9-10,21). Contrary to the status of refugee that has been extensively studied and regulated for the first time during the 1951 Refugee Convention, research and policy-making on the issues related to IDPs took a major shift only at the beginning of the 1990s following the events that occurred after the end of the Cold War. One episode in particular, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and its resulting displacement emergency that spread throughout the Balkan area, put this expanding humanitarian issue under the spotlight and stimulated researchers and the international community to study causes and ways to contain forced migrations and internal displacements (Brookings Institution, 2014, p. 4).

After a disaster hits a community, newly displaced are mainly IDPs because the affected population tend to stay within the national borders. For the majority of IDPs, leaving their homes does not always translate into the cease of dangers; on the contrary, being displaced often results in an increment of their exposure to natural hazards, food insecurity, diseases and

several threats to their life. On the top of that, most of IDPs live in protracted situations because it was not possible to secure lasting solutions. They are compelled to live in emergency camps or in temporary facilities for years, continually exposed to threats of multiple kind, which further undermines their conditions and making them even more vulnerable to hazards (Brookings Institution, 2014, p. 3). Only by ensuring durable solutions to displacement, IDPs will be able to rebuilt their lives and increase their resilience against all sort of perils.

Disasters are one of the main causes that increase displacement worldwide¹. Just by taking into account the number of newly displaced in 2013 — more that 22.4 million — we can grasp at the seriousness of the problem. IDMC estimated that since 2008 more that 160 million people had to flee from their land of origin due to disasters (IDMC, 2013). Displacement is one of the several impacts of disasters that contributes to transform a hazard event into a catastrophe. One of the key concepts in the study of disaster-related displacement is the notion of risk because through its management it is possible to reduce vulnerabilities and thus limit displacements. Disaster risk is understood as “the probability of an outcome (e.g., the loss of life, injury or destroyed or damaged capital stock) resulting from the occurrence of a damaging physical event during a given period of time” (Ginnetti, 2015, pp. 10,16). In this study, displacement risk and disaster risk are considered the same thing, as the former is the outcome of the latter. The population of the Asian countries have the highest risk of being displaced, the Philippines in particular has a long history of disaster-related displacement crisis (Ginnetti, 2015, p. 8; Beck, 2014, p. 9). Every year the country is hit by extreme hazards (the most frequent are: typhoons; earthquakes; volcanic eruptions and floods), that develop into disasters causing devastation and displacement when they occur in the presence of a vulnerable and exposed population. The high frequency of these events makes the Philippines one of the most disaster prone countries in the world in fact it ranks second in the World Risk Index² (Ibid., p.9). The most striking catastrophe that occurred recently was typhoon Yolanda — internationally known as Haiyan — that hit the Philippine archipelago in November 2013: it affected more than 14 million people, displaced 4 million and wiped out or severely damaged one million of houses (Kent, 2014). Complex and extensive displacement situations such as this one put a strain on the entire country and reverse the development gains achieved in years of hard work. If IDPs are not included in programs to

¹ The other causes are conflicts, violence and human rights violations and development-projects activities such as dams or other large infrastructures (IDMC, 2013).

² The World Risk Index examines the risk of becoming the victim of a disaster resulting from an extreme natural event for every country worldwide.

rebuild their lives and livelihoods, they are likely to suffer other displacements as they remain vulnerable and exposed to other disasters.

1.1 Problem formulation and research questions

In the Philippines in 2014, about 6.5 million people were forced to flee from their land of origin due to natural disasters (IDMC, 2015). Through plans of recovery and rehabilitation, the humanitarian emergency was somehow contained and most of those displaced were able to leave the temporary camps and return to their homes or settle permanently in other parts of the country. However, not all IDPs had the opportunity to rebuild their lives and get back to normality. As of March 2015, it has been estimated that the Philippines has more than 453,000 IDPs living in protracted situations: 326,000 are people still displaced as a result of disasters caused by natural hazards and 127,000 resulted from conflict and violence (IDMC, 2015). The fact that according to several researchers³, the number of disasters and of newly displaced people in the Philippines is expected to increase in the years to come, lead to formulate the research question of this thesis:

Why are the Filipinos still not able to adequately withstand natural disasters and avoid frequent displacements?

To give an answer to this research question, I have decided to focus on two of the possible factors that can increase the level of vulnerability of Filipinos and consequently their likelihood of being displaced by a disaster. The two factors are the economic policies implemented by the Philippine government since the early 1980s and deforestation. Both factors will be investigated through the use of sub-questions.

After an initial review of the main reports regarding disaster risk management, it was evident that social systems and the incidence of poverty and inequalities are factors that increase the probabilities of being displaced. For example, people with low income as well as having limited means to protect themselves from hazard, are often compelled to live in areas where land is cheaper but located in disaster-prone sites. According to a report published by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Philippines is not going to be able to achieve the target set

³ i.e see Ginnetti, 2015; Hilario, et al., 2011.

by the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG), that is to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015. In fact, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty conditions declined only from 34.4 percent to 25.2 percent in the period 1991-2012 (NEDA, 2013). Because the poverty issue has always been a persistent problem in the country, since the early 1980s the Philippines driven by the desire of increasing its economic growth and reduce the poverty levels decided to change its development strategy. With a plan guided and 'Imposed' by international institutions such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO); the Philippines, through a number of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and state-led reforms, shifted from an import substitution strategy to a neo-liberal development model based on an outward-oriented policy approach (Bello, 2009). The fact that, as suggested by several scholars (see Bello, 2009; Sison, 2013; Hickel, 2012), these reforms not only did not produce the economic benefits that were foreseen but also contributed to generate slow economic growth and increased levels of social inequality among the Filipinos, led me to formulate the first sub-question of this thesis:

How did the Structural Adjustment Programs implemented since the 1980s affected the vulnerability of the poorest strata of the Philippine society?

The second factor, deforestation, has been selected because there is a strong correlation between the misuse of the environment and disaster risk. The increasing needs of the modern society, both in terms of natural resources and raw materials, has led to an environmental devastation at a global scale. Big corporations all over the world exploit resources through mining, pollute water and air and carry out extensive deforestation without taking into consideration that all these actions can lead to the formation of a potential hazard. In addition, factors such as population growth and climate change can contribute to intensify the disaster risk. Even in the Philippines, political and economic interest prevailed over the preservation of nature and during the years, the country has suffered a growing environmental devastation. For example, in little more than 400 years, the Philippines has lost over 80 percent of its original forest cover (Acaps, 2014). In the Philippines, there have been various allegations of corruption concerning the mining and logging industries. Many have argued that the government has promulgated laws to favor the interests of large companies and that often the Local Government Units (LGUs) instead of enforcing the rules against illegal logging tend to ignore these

forbidden actions (Repetto & Gillis, 1988). These facts seem also confirmed by Sheila Coronel et al. (2004) that defined the Philippines' Congress as "an elite body that defends the interest of the wealthy and the powerful"; and by prof. Brillo, according to which "political power in the Philippine society is presumed to be skewed and concentrated in one dominant group, an elite that controls policy-making most of the time" (Brillo, 2011). These thoughts brought me to advance the second sub-question of this research:

What role has the political landscape in increasing the vulnerability of the population through deforestation?

The choice of the theories and the collection of the empirical information will be guided by the general hypothesis that was developed from the main problem formulation and the sub-questions:

The outcomes of the Structural Adjustment Programs and the political landscape are negatively affecting the coping capacities of Filipinos, thus increasing their level of displacement risk.

1.2 Scope of the research

This thesis sets out to investigate how displacement risk is constructed in the Philippines. Displacement is caused by a disaster when it strike a vulnerable community, but the level of vulnerability of the individuals can be influenced by economic policies, by the effectiveness and fairness in the governance and by the structure and type of the society. For example, some of the risks and the conditions that can bring certain Filipinos to suffer disproportionately more than others, can arise from wrong and ineffective policies, corrupt actions that favor the interests of the few rather than the welfare of many and by a society characterized by deep inequalities and widespread poverty.

By collecting empirical data and applying theoretical approaches, the aim of this research will be to understand how political and economic factors are influencing and producing the vulnerability of Filipinos to natural disasters.

2 Background Information

2.1 Disaster: Definition and main characteristics

The term ‘disaster’ originates from the Latin word *dis-astrum* that can be translated with ‘ill-starred event’ or more simply as ‘bad star’. This word transmits an idea of an external, uncontrollable, random, and unavoidable event that hits a well-working society and causes destruction (UNISDR, 2015, p. 25). For many centuries, these attributes have portrayed disasters merely as ‘acts of God’ or of ‘Nature’ in other words, in ways that tends to emphasize the physical force of nature as the main cause of danger, destruction and death (natural events as triggers to disasters). According to this paradigm, the degree and the extent of the destruction caused by the disaster was measured depending on the intensity and frequency of the physical event (Gaillard, et al., 2007, p. 258). This paradigm has greatly influenced the way by which we refer to these cataclysmic events — very often textbooks or various websites (even the ones of leading international agencies) call ‘natural disasters’ the devastating aftermaths of earthquakes, landslides, or tsunamis etc. Although it is a widespread practice, it is an inaccuracy because disasters cannot be natural, what is natural is the trigger of the disaster, in other words the natural hazards (UNISDR, 2013).

The consideration of disasters mainly as physical outcomes remained the dominant perspective until the 1970s until an alternative and more radical view began to gain consensus. The supporters of this new line of thought believe in the influence of human actions in the formation of calamities, more precisely they stress on the role of socio-economic and organizational aspects as active contributing factors that raises the *risk* of occurrence of a disaster, therefore increasing the so-called disaster risk (Junega, 2008). This new paradigm recognize that the causes of the disasters also have to be found "locally" as specific conditions and characteristics of communities — such as social inequalities, geographic location and the political and economic context — contributes to make people vulnerable and therefore increasing the likelihood of disasters (Gaillard, et al., 2007, p. 258).

The majority of people tend to attribute death and destruction present in the aftermath of a disaster to natural events, but they tend to exclude significant social, economic and political factors that affected the intensity and the way by which the hazard hit the people and their assets. It is important to remember that the internal and external causes of disasters, or rather, the natural and the human components of disasters, are extremely connected as human activities such as deforestation, the construction of dams or greenhouse gases emissions can modify the

intensity and how natural events manifest themselves (Wiser, et al., 2003, pp. 7,9). Humans cannot decrease the incidence or magnitude of natural hazards, but they can make sure that their actions do not contribute to transform natural phenomena into disasters. According to this perspective, an event can be defined disaster only if there is the co-presence of two conditions: the manifestation of a natural phenomenon (called hazardous event) and the impact of the latter on a vulnerable population exposed to this hazard. Consequently, an earthquake that takes place in an inhabited area with no buildings cannot be regarded as a disaster. The degree of the catastrophe is attributed to the magnitude of the hazard and on the level of vulnerability of the community affected (GTZ, 2004, p. 16). This thesis will use the definition of disaster given by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR, 2009b): “A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources”. Disaster risk, that as previously said can be understood as the ‘the probability of a negative outcome’, is characterized by three key elements: hazards, vulnerability and exposure.

Hazard

UNISDR (2009b) defines hazard as “*a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage*”. In a few words, it can be seen as the ‘trigger’ of a possible disaster. A Hazards can be divided into two main categories: anthropogenic hazards (also known as man-made hazards) and natural hazards (Nelson, 2014). The first ones are dangerous situation generated by human actions or errors that if not contained can turn into human-made-disasters, like the technical failure of the Chernobyl power plant or the 9/11 terrorist attack against the World Trade Center. Natural hazard instead are physical events originating in the natural environment that could cause harm to people and their assets. Natural hazards can be classified into five categories⁴ : *Geophysical Hazards*: events originating from geological processes, like adjustment and collision of tectonic plates. These movements can trigger earthquakes, mass movements and volcanic activities. *Hydrological Hazards*: Phenomena driven by changes in the normal water cycle or from the

⁴ Hydrological, meteorological and climatological hazard can be clustered in a single category called Hydro-Meteorological Hazards.

overflow of large volumes of water. This includes tsunamis, floods and wet mass movement (like mudslides and avalanches). *Meteorological Hazards*: are events originating from weather/atmospheric processes. This includes storms and its sub-groups (e.g. tropical cyclone or typhoon). *Climatological Hazards*: it is defined as “A hazard caused by long-lived, meso- to macro-scale atmospheric processes ranging from intra-seasonal to multi-decadal climate variability” (CRED, 2009). The main hazards of this type are: drought, wildfires and events related to extreme temperatures like heat or cold waves. And lastly, *Biological Hazards*, events driven by the spread of infectious diseases or by the exposure to toxic elements or toxins. Examples are epidemics and insect infestations and plagues. (Tschakert, et al., 2014), (Guha-Sapir, et al., 2013).

Vulnerability

The second element, vulnerability “*denotes the inadequate means or ability to protect oneself against the adverse impact of external events on the one hand and on the other to recover quickly from the effects of the natural event*” (GTZ, 2002, p. 47). The degree of vulnerability is strongly related to the concepts of coping capacity and poverty. The first can be described as the faculty of an individual to use his abilities and resources at his disposal to mitigate or “bounce” situations of crisis disasters (UNISDR, 2009b). The level of poverty strongly influences the opportunities and choices available to people: poor people often lack access to basic services and have limited options that in turn forces them to live in areas with a high risk of being affected by hazards (DFID, 2006, p. 5). Food shortages, living in disaster-prone areas in houses not suitable to withstand disasters, are all potential factors that exacerbates their level of vulnerability.

Exposure

Exposure can be seen as the totality of persons and things (such as assets, commodities etc.) within the range of a hazard that are thereby subject to harms (UNISDR, 2009b). It is regarded as the factor that contributes the most in raising the levels of disaster risk (Ginnetti, 2015, p. 13). According to UNISDR, disaster risk is increasingly growing because the exposure of people and assets to natural hazards is expanding more rapidly than the capacity to prevent or mitigate the effects of disasters (2009, p. 3).

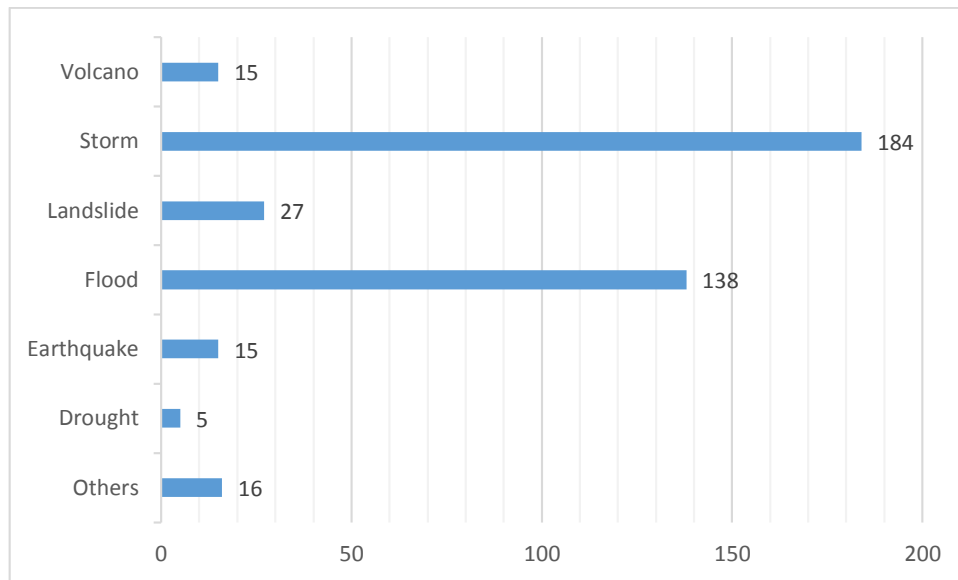
Nowadays, due to several reasons which include the increase of the world population, lack of space in the cities, access to better transport routes, limited or no economic resources

— more and more people are forced to live in highly disaster prone areas (Ibid.). The reasons that push people to move in these areas are of socio-economic (and sometimes political) nature. This fact has radically changed the face of many towns: we are witnessing the formation of more and larger slums and an unprecedented increase in population in coastal areas, near rivers or close to mountains and volcanoes slopes is taking place. This high concentration of people can be a problem when these settlements occur in areas with high-risk of being affected by hazards such as landslides, flooding, tsunamis or typhoons. The likelihood that these high levels of exposure will lead or turn into disaster increase if, as often happens, these people live in homes that are not suitable to withstand extreme situations (e.g. like in the slums where houses are often built using scrap materials).

2.2 Disasters in the Philippines

The archipelago of the Philippines is considered to be one of the most disaster prone places in the world. According to a study conducted in 2014 by the United Nations University's Institute for Environment and Human security (UNU-EHS), the Philippines ranks second in the World Risk Index, an indicator that measures the propensity of a country to be affected by a natural hazard (Garschagen, et al., 2014, p. 9). In the Philippines, disasters are mainly caused by floods, earthquakes, typhoons, drought, and volcanic eruptions (Harkey, 2014, p. 26). Disasters occur with such a frequency that the majority of Filipinos experience at least one (if not multiple) disasters in their lifetime (Bankoff, 2012, p. 265). In fact, to have an idea of the severity of the situation, according to one of the most comprehensive disaster databases in the world —the EM-DAT developed by the Center for research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED⁵) — in the period 1985-2014, the Philippines experienced at least 400 disasters with that translates into an average of 13.3 events per year. These figures makes the Philippines the country that has been hit by hazards more than any other has from natural hazard-made disasters (CRED, 2015; Bankoff, 2007, p. 2).

⁵ NB: In order for a disaster to be registered into the CRED's database, at least one of the following criteria has to be fulfilled: 10 or more people reported killed; 100 people reported affected; a call for international assistance; declaration of a state of emergency. Website: http://emdat.be/country_profile/index.html



*Fig. 1: Number of disasters in the Philippines in the period 1985-2014.
Source CRED (adapted) available at http://emdat.be/country_profile/index.html*

As we can see from Figure 1, storms and flood are the two disasters that occurred more frequently, followed by landslides, earthquakes, volcanic activities and lastly droughts. The Philippines is affected by so many disasters because it is located in a very peculiar zone of the earth: its islands lay in a corridor labeled ‘the Pacific typhoon belt’ and on top of the so-called ‘Ring of fire’ (Ginnetti, et al., 2013, p. 3). The first one is called in that way because of the large number of tropical cyclones that go through that area. This particular position makes the country the destination of almost 20 typhoons per year, a quarter of which are devastating (ADRC, 2008). The Ring of fire can be described as a ‘string of earth’ that stretches along the borders of the Pacific Ocean (all along the western coast of the Americas, through the Bering Strait, across Japan and ending into New Zealand), in which occur 90 percent of the seismic activities and are located 75 percent of all active volcanoes of the planet (Turgeon, n.d.). Therefore, the Philippines can be considered as a country with a high susceptibility to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In the period between 1985-2014 it has been estimated that disasters affected more 165 million people causing damages for over \$21.2 billion (CRED, 2015). Disasters, undermining or destroying people’s already poor and fragile livelihoods, condemn the affected population to higher levels of poverty and vulnerability.

The United Nations (UN) defines climate change as “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods” (UNISDR, 2009b). Because many disasters are triggered by natural hazards

which are connected to what occurs in the atmosphere, (e.g. tropical cyclones, extreme temperatures, drought and floods) there is a strong correlation between the effects of climate change and displacement. The significance of this relationship was already foreseen in the 1990 when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimated that by 2050 more than 150 million people will become IDPs because of desertification and other climate change-related disasters (Brookings Institution, 2014).

By increasing the frequency and severity of weather-related hazards, climate change is expected to put a strain on the part of population that live in areas with a high risk of disasters, in particular the communities living in extreme conditions of vulnerability due to their difficult economic situation such as urban dwellers (Ginnetti, 2015). The intensification of hazards such as extreme temperatures, typhoons, drought and heavy rainfalls will not have only an impact in the formation of IDPs and on the environment, but will have serious consequences in terms of development losses as it will affect the agriculture and farming of many countries. Like in all the rest of the world, even in the Philippines, the adverse effects of global warming and climate change are projected to increase in the future. For example, all the country will get warmer with temperatures expected to increase by 1.8°C to 2.2°C by the mid of this century. These increasing changes are already visible in the bigger number of hot days and warm nights, more frequent rains and violent storms. Being an archipelago with one of the longest coastlines in the world (about 32,400 km), the Philippines are particularly prone to suffer from typhoons and from the dangers arising from the rise of the sea level like storm surges and floods (Hilario, et al., 2011). Therefore, if nothing is done to contain and prevent the effects of disasters, it is predictable that the number of victims, IDPs and the economic losses in the Philippines will rise in the years ahead.

3 Methodological Framework

In the following chapter the methodological considerations and choices that have been made to address the research question are presented and discussed. The first section will provide a detailed description of three aspects of the research design, namely the theoretical perspective used, the research approach to the data and finally the research strategy. The second section, the one concerning the analytical method of research, will deal with a critical reflection on the documents and sources used for this inquiry and will present a thorough explanation of how the empirical data have been collected. The last section will explain the motives that led to choose the Philippines as the case study of this research.

3.1 Research Design

To tackle a research question in the best way possible, a researcher must make use of an efficient and well-studied research design. An adequate plan can be tailored through four steps: selecting the theoretical perspective of the inquiry; identifying the research approach; choosing a suitable strategy of investigation (or research strategy); and defining the research method.

To begin with, the theoretical perspective used in this research will be interpretivism and specifically it will employ a hermeneutic approach. From an interpretivist point of view, human actions can be understood solely in terms of set of meanings that they carry intrinsically. A researcher can acquire an understanding and grasp the meaning of actions, only through interpretation and evaluation of the context (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191). A hermeneutic inquiry will allow this process because it can unveil “meanings and intentions that are, in a sense, hidden in the text” (Crotty, 1998, p. 91). Thus, unlike in inquiries which follow a positivist approach that seek to provide an explanation, hermeneutics is more concerned with gaining an understanding (Kinsella, 2006). Hence, as the aim of the research is to understand why Filipinos are not able to withstand disasters and avoid displacement, the interpretivist hermeneutic approach was thought to be the best way to ‘guide’ this research.

The second step to build up an adequate research design is to decide how to interact with the data, therefore this involves the choice between a deductive and an inductive approach. According to Gray (2014, p. 16), the main difference between these two approaches is that in the former the thinking process starts from the general towards the particular; on the other hand, in the latter the opposite occurs as the reasoning is conducted from details pointing to a general picture. Given that the purpose of this research is not to ‘build a theory’ but rather to employ

theories to better understand the problem of disaster-related displacement, this thesis will be conducted using a deductive approach. An analytical framework formed by two theories — neoliberalism and elite theory — has been selected to be the ‘lenses’ to analyze the data in order to acquire the knowledge necessary to give an answer to the research question⁶.

The third step in the process of designing a study procedure, concerns the choice of the research strategy. According to Lijphart (1971) the four fundamental methods are: the comparative, the statistical, the experimental and the case study. Among all these strategies, the case study has been selected because it was the one that allowed to maintain some freedom in exploring the breadth of topic but at the same time permitted to conduct a detailed study of the issue. To avoid conceptual confusion, this Master’s thesis uses the definition of case study given by Professor Stake (1995): “[a] study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi).

Among all the possible models of case studies⁷, this investigation can be considered as an *intrinsic case study* and its design can be labeled as *holistic* and *single-case* investigation. Unlike the other types that might be selected for their predisposition to draw generalizations; intrinsic case studies do not aim to improve or build a theory. A researcher decides to use this strategy as result of his ‘pure interest’ in the topic and not because he or she wants to highlight a particular aspect or issue. In other words, the inquiry is driven by an eagerness of knowing and understanding more about the subject and the problem (Stake, 1994, p. 237). To a certain extent, it can be said that in this type of case study the *case* is dominant rather than the issue itself. According to the description provided by Yin (2014), the design of this case study can be regarded as single because only one context is considered in this research, the displacement in the Philippines, and therefore, no contrasting cases will be analyzed. Lastly, the case study can be defined as holistic because the investigation involves only one unit of analysis — the Philippines as a whole — and therefore no embedded subunits will be taken into consideration.

⁶ A thorough description of the two theories (Neoliberalism and Elite Theory) will be provided in the 4th chapter of this research.

⁷ For example, Prof. Stake (1994, p. 237) identified three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective; Prof. Lijphart (1971, p. 691) divided the case study inquiry into six types: atheoretical, Interpretative, hypotesis-generating, theory-confirming, theory-infirming and deviant.

3.2 Method of research

As analytical method of research, this thesis will employ document analysis that can be defined as “a process of evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced” (Bowen, 2009, pp. 33-34). In investigations which make use of this method of qualitative research, researchers extrapolates the empirical information necessary to ‘build’ the inquiry through the interpretation of data and drawing relationships between the concepts discovered (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11).

Of course, before undertaking an investigation using this research method, it is fundamental to have a clear idea of what a document is and what types can be employed in an investigation. In this thesis, I will employ the definition of document given by Suzanne Briet that is “any physical or symbolic sign, preserved or recorded, intended to represent, to reconstruct, or to demonstrate a physical or conceptual phenomenon” (Briet as cited in Barber & Peniston-Bird, 2009). Consequently, reports, policy papers, e-mails, newspapers, books, agendas, blogs, posters, maps, manuals and survey data, are all examples of valid resources that can be used to carry out an investigation using this specific method. To address the research question, this research made use of both, qualitative and quantitative data. Due to the impossibility of conducting direct observations, the inquiry made mainly use of secondary sources. Specifically, books, annual or special reports of various international organizations and research institutes, online news, journals, and other documents gathered from Aalborg University’s e-Library and from the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) that all together helped to form a general overview of the issues. On the other hand, specific knowledge like poverty and wellbeing indexes, policies implemented by the Government of the Philippines, were mainly collected using primary sources like government documents, reports and blueprints drafted by international organizations. Other relevant data was collected from government websites (like the Philippine Statistics Authority website) and from online databases such as the one of the WB and the IMF. The data collection, carried out following the step model, relied only on the most authoritative and relevant documents and tried, besides providing information on the general context, to focus on the present situation in the country. One of the distinctive characteristics of case studies is to allow the researcher to undertake an analysis from different perspectives (Tellis, 1997). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) point out that certain projects cannot make use of a single perspective to fully understand the problem examined because certain issues require a deeper and more holistic analysis. To do so, they suggest to avoid structuring case studies around the single party involved, and try to plan it

according to the context using the different perspectives that can be built on it. For this reason, this thesis will make use of multiple perspectives obtained from different types of documents. The data extrapolated from the documents published by international bodies such as the WB, the WTO and the UN, will provide useful information to undertake a macro-level analysis. The materials collected will provide the perspective of those who have pressured for, and in certain cases imposed, various economic reforms to the Philippines. Moreover, the information gathered using governmental resources, will highlight an 'internal' perspective to the problem that will allow to understand how the government perceives the problem of IDPs and its attitude towards the various groups of elites which exert a strong influence in the country. Given the impossibility of obtaining empirical data directly from displaced people through interviews and first-hand observation, the closest approximate perspective that will allow to understand the problems of the IDPs will be provided by the information taken from sources such as: conference papers, academic articles, reports drafted by international development organizations such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and surveys. The use of this multiplicity of perspectives will allow to obtain a broader and more accurate understanding of the problem.

Heffernam (n.d.) identified several ways to conduct a document analysis and to analyze a text: semiotics; discourse analysis; quantitative and qualitative content analysis; conversational-discourse analysis and grounded theory. Among all the methods listed above, the one that suited the most the needs of this research was the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) method. This decision was mainly conditioned by the fact that research makes extensive use of qualitative data. QCA is as a methodological technique that through a step by step analysis and a process of inference of a text, enables researchers to collect and organize the information into categories and sub-categories (Krippendorff, 1969, p. 103). According to Tesch (1990), the fact that the qualitative research literature does not define strict rules and precise procedures for the QCA, allows to the researchers that employ this method to have a good flexibility during the data collection. However, a researcher must nevertheless clearly define the method that she/he will follow to extrapolate the data from the documents. The method used for this thesis to collect the data, can be divided into five steps: an initial review of the existing literature; identification of a coding procedure (see fig. 2); a meticulous reading of the relevant documents; a coding process together with the identification of key points through the interpretation of data; and lastly, a labeling and clustering process of the relevant information into categories or themes. The review and skimming of the main and recent reports on displacement and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) formed the background and served to gain

the basic notions to adequately undertake this study. In accordance with prof. Mayring's (2000) conviction that existing theories and analytical frameworks can help to identify variables of interest and formulate a coding system, this research made use of the notions provided by neoliberalism, elite theory to define *how* and *what* data collect and form a coding strategy.

During the meticulous reading of the documents, it has been very useful to make some notes on the side of documents or to circle the words that expressed the key ideas. These two operations, together with the labeling of the main topics, simplified the interpretation of the relevant data and 'directed' the inclusion of the notions into one category instead of another. To facilitate the selection and categorization of the information before and during the reading of each document, it was essential to analyze critically the sources. This process was carried out trying to answer to a series of questions. Some examples can be: '*What type of document is it? Who produced it? What perspective does it represent? What is the purpose of the document? What does this document tell me about displacement?*'. This critical reasoning on the texts, not only helped to confirm the validity of the various documents used, but it was also instrumental to conduct an efficient and reliable data collection.

As mentioned before, the process of interpretation of data must be accompanied by a precise cataloging and organization of the information. By doing so important data will not be lost and it will be easier to identify relationships and patterns. To extrapolate the data from the documents, this research followed the following step model:

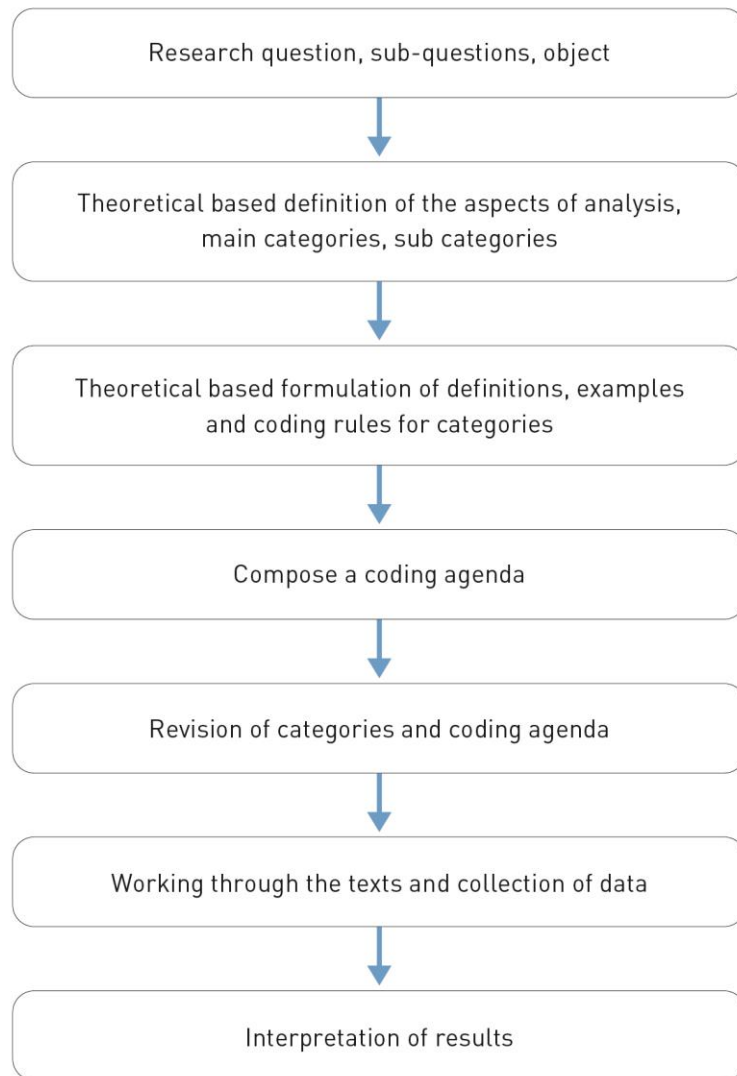


Fig. 2 Step model of the qualitative content analysis. Based on (Mayring, 2000)
Available at <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1089/2385>

The categories according to which the empirical data will be collected and organized will adhere to the following coding agenda compiled using the aforementioned coding system:

Category	Explanation	Coding instruction
C1 Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the Philippines	SAPs include the reforms that have been put in place in the Philippines to create the institutional framework to ensure a free market oriented development strategy (therefore, policies aimed at deregulation, privatization and liberalization).	<p>Include in this category a description of the trade/economic reforms that have been implemented in the country to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adhere to the condition imposed by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the WTO (with particular attention to those relating to agriculture) 2) Create the institutional framework to ensure a free market oriented development strategy <p>e.g. the Agreement on the agriculture (AOA), and the Trade Liberalization Program imposed by the WB in 1980.</p> <p>Phrases that highlight pros and cons of these reforms.</p>
C2 Poverty and Inequality	<p>Poverty is mainly understood as lack of financial capital (income) and assets (e.g. subsidies, safety nets), but other aspects related to a state of poverty have to be taken into account (e.g. level of vulnerability, lack of opportunities, level of illiteracy and poor quality of housing).</p> <p>Inequality is mainly meant as income inequality and wealth distribution in the country. The Gini index can be a useful indicator.</p>	<p>Include data and narrative regarding the level of poverty and inequality in the Philippines (with special focus on the current situation in the rural areas); phrases that highlight the link between poverty and displacement risk.</p> <p>Priority should be given to the notions linked to the concept of disaster, displacement and vulnerability.</p>
C3 Deforestation	Overview of the forest products extraction in the Philippines (Historical background, current situation and consequences).	<p>Include the data and narrative regarding the laws enforced; phrases that show the possible relationship between deforestation and influential elite families; contribution of deforestation in the formation of landslides; phases that show irresponsibility and/or negligence of the timber extraction organizations.</p>
C4 Political landscape	With political landscape the author mainly refers to the relationship between the two actors of the Philippine political system of greatest interest for this research, namely the government and the various groups of wealthy and influential elites formed over the years in the country.	<p>Select all the information and narrative useful to form a description of how these two actors interact in the logging industry.</p>
C5 Corruption	Corruption is primarily meant as a set of (dishonest) behaviors that constitute criminal offences that may affect the economic and social development of a country.	<p>Include data and narrative concerning the corrupt actions carried out in the logging industry.</p> <p>If possible phrases that link corruption to deforestation and disaster risk.</p>

Table 1 Coding Agenda

The process of categorization, besides collecting the empirical knowledge necessary to give an answer to the research question, facilitated several operations: the cross-data analysis, the identification of causal relationships and patterns between the data; and finally the drawing of generalizations.

Like all the other research methods that could have been use, even employing document analysis entails advantages and disadvantages. Some benefits that can be obtained are the possibility to provide very accurate information (such as names and dates) and the chance of having access to a very large number of documents (especially thorough the Internet). Regarding the disadvantages, one weakness of this method is the possibility of biased selectivity. For example, when analyzing a text regarding a particular policy implemented by the Philippine government, there is the chance that the only documents available are the ones that have been written by the government itself and therefore they might be biased (Bowen, 2009, pp. 31-32). Given the several benefits that can be gained by using this method, document analysis is to be considered a valid method of research even because the potential problem of biased selectivity can be reduced by retrieving data from different sources whenever possible.

3.3 Case study selection

Given the increasing number of disasters that occur globally and the fact that more and more countries are struggling to contain the devastating consequences of disasters (including displacement), the focus could have fallen on several other countries instead of Philippine archipelago. As it was previously elaborated, Asia is the continent that is most affected by disasters, thus an interesting idea would have been to analyze and compare how different countries (especially China and India) deal with disaster-related displacement. However, due to the complexity of the problem and to the diversity of backgrounds of the countries which make up Asia, it was believed more logical to focus on only one country, the Philippines. This decision permitted to conduct a more specific and comprehensive analysis.

As mentioned earlier, a distinctive feature of intrinsic case studies is that the selection of the object of study is guided by a pure interest in the topic. In fact, the particular situation of displacement in the Philippines has been chosen because of the strong curiosity and attraction to the case. The choice fell on this specific Southeast Asian country mainly for four reasons: first of all, it is one of the most disaster prone places in the world, both in terms of numbers and of magnitude. Secondly, the fact that the United Nations special representative for DRR, Margareta Wahlström, defined the Philippines' disaster risk management (DRM) laws as the

best ones and the most advanced in the world⁸ (PreventionWeb, 2012). This has stimulated the interest in investigating why despite having a so advanced and specific system of laws, the country is facing so many difficulties in containing the formation of IDPs. The third reason concerns the country's unique and very interesting background. Because the Philippines suffered a double colonial experience — first the Spanish dominance (1565-1898) and then the American rule (1898-1946) — has deeply influenced the evolution of the country and resulted in the formation of a unique social structure and a fragile political-economic institutional system. Just to name an aspect, according to the World Bank (2012) 25.12 percent of the population live under the poverty line and in the rural areas the poverty incidence is over 50 percent (Ballesteros, 2011). Like many other developing countries, even the Philippines are characterized by a patronage system, widespread corruption and by the presence of small oligarchy of powerful elites (mainly landowners, rich corporate executives and politicians) which strongly influence the political and economic decisions made by the government (Karadag, 2011). Lastly, a technical aspect influence the decision to select the Philippines: being a former American colony has led the country to adopt English as one of the official languages and therefore almost all the research material is in English.

Among the many classifications by which a case study can be classified, definitely one of those fundamental ones is to clarify whether if it is a worse case, best case or a typical case. For several reasons, this case study focused on Philippines can be considered as a worst-case scenario; although for certain traits it can also be defined as unique. The arguments that lead me to make this consideration are based on data concerning the number of disasters suffered, the scale of displacement and the level of development of the country. Specifically, it can be noted:

- ***The level of disaster risk of the country is among the highest in the world.*** As already mentioned, according to the World Risk Index, the Philippine archipelago is the country with the second highest risk of becoming a victim of a disaster and the third most exposed country in the world (Beck, 2014) .
- ***The number of disasters that the country faced is massive.*** According to the disaster database developed by CRED, with at least 400 disasters between 1985-2014, the Philippines suffered more disasters than any other country (CRED, 2015).

⁸ Specifically, she referred to the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act and the Climate Change Act.

- ***The number of IDPs scattered around the country remains at dramatic levels.*** As reported by the IDMC (2015) over 25 million people were displaced in the period 2008-2014, with the massive figure of 5.8 million newly displaced in 2014 (the largest recorded displacement at a global level). To this number it has to be added more than 140,000 IDPs uprooted by previous disasters that are still living in emergency camps.
- ***The Philippines have the highest population / displaced ratio.*** Over the period 2008-2014, China, India and the Philippines were the three worst affected countries. In absolute terms China suffered higher levels of displacement than the Philippines, but proportionate to the population size, hence in relative terms, the number of people forced to flee in the Philippines has been much more significant, as said, over 25 million (Yonetani, 2014) .

4 Analytical Framework

In this part of the thesis, the analytical framework used to tackle the research question will be presented and described in detail. Given the complexity and multiplicity of the topics involved in the research, to fully understand and analyze all the data it was deemed necessary to employ two theories, namely neoliberalism and elite theory. After a brief chapter dedicated to some considerations regarding the reasons behind the selection of this analytical framework, a detailed description of the theories will be provided. Because of the close correlation between elite and corruption, some key notions about the latter are given after the presentation of the theories.

4.1 Choice of the theories

Neoliberalism has been selected because it can help to understand why despite the implementation of a free market oriented development strategy and the several efforts of the government to boost the economy of the country, widespread poverty and unequal distribution of wealth are two constant features of the Philippines. This scarcity of resources, as well as putting a strain on the life of many Filipinos preventing them to properly protect themselves from natural disasters, forces entire communities to move to seek for new livelihoods. However, this search often lead them to settle disaster-prone areas. Moreover, this theory can shade light on the reasons that led the government to decide to carry out a number of state-led reforms to setup an open capital market system. Among the many, of particular importance are the Structural Adjustment Programs enforced since the 1980s which had and it still have a tremendous influence on the economic and social development of the country. It can be argued that the reforms shaped according to the neoliberal political agenda that were implemented by all the Presidents since the early 1980s, did not produce the economic benefits that were foreseen. In fact, several scholars claim that for many years neoliberal policies contributed to generate slow economic growth rates and increased levels of social inequality among the Filipinos (Bello, 2009; Sison, 2013; Hickel, 2012). Through the lens of neoliberalism, it is going to be possible to explain and investigate if SPAs imposed by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and changes in the policies that regulates the market demanded by the WTO, were used as an instrument by the dominant class to make profits at the expenses of the poor people. In other words, discover if these reforms were conducive to create a society in which often the well-being of the population is subordinated to economic growth.

As several researchers suggested, (see Bello (2009), Coxhead & Jayasuriya (2004), Vitug (1998)) that the policymaking in the Philippines and most of the government decisions are influenced by a small group of rich and powerful people, the *Elite Theory* is well suited to analyze and interpret the socio-political structure of the Philippines. To begin with, as one of the hypotheses of this thesis is that political and economic interests of a small elite group can adversely affect the level of vulnerability to disasters of many Filipinos, it is going to be possible to study the distribution of power and the effects that an improper and corrupt practices have on in increasing displacement risk. Through the lenses of this theory and analyzing the political landscape of the Philippines, several things can be studied. For example, firstly, it will be feasible to check if the policies implemented by the government reflect the interests of the population or those of a small number of people. Secondly, examine if the Philippine political landscape is influenced by wealthy businesspeople to accommodate personal interests. Lastly, determine if and how much of the slow development, inequality and high levels of displacement risk present in the Philippines can be blamed to a small group of individuals that hold most of the country's resources.

4.2 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, also known as market fundamentalism, is a political economic paradigm that influenced the international scene since its adoption, in the early 1970s, as the dominant economic ideology by most of the world countries following its endorsement by the United States and Great Britain (Hickel, 2012). Neoliberalist thought, that has been greatly influenced by the ideas of economists Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, rests on the conviction that individual freedoms can be secured only by freedom of market and of trade. Hence, they strongly support the idea that the best way to realize the human well-being is by supporting the creation of an institutional framework designed to ensure free market, unrestrained trade and private property rights, in which private entrepreneurship can prosper (Harvey, 2005). In other words, the main goal of neoliberalism is to increase economic growth by forging an unregulated market in which the role of the state in the economy is reduced just at ensuring the proper functioning of this open-market framework (Wahidi, 2012). However, the international economic and political arena have not always been with these features because this economic ideology was preceded by an economic approach with principles of opposite nature for many years.

The years from the Great Depression until the oil crisis of 1973 were characterized by fiscal and monetary policies totally different from those enforced nowadays. In those years, the economic theories developed by the British economist John Maynard Keynes in response to the great crisis of the 1930s, were regarded by many countries as the guidelines and the main economic model to be adopted. Economic growth based on full employment, the intervention of the state in the matter of economic policies and the promotion of welfare systems to guarantee the well-being of the citizens, were the pillars of Keynesian economics (Harvey, 2005). Following a long period characterized by high inflation and economic stagnation caused by the oil shock of the early seventies, the only way to reverse the crisis situation was believed to be the adoption of economic policies radically different from the Keynesian ones, namely those promoted by neoliberalism (Hickel, 2012). This change of direction was at first strongly promoted by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and then it was followed by the entire capitalist world (Sison, 2013). Neoliberal thinking can be summarized with the following main points: the rule of the market, that is the non-interference of the state in the economic arena and the promotion of international trade and investments; deregulation; the privatization of the public services and properties; and lastly the dismantlement the welfare state by reducing the expenditure on social services (Martines & Garcia, 1996).

The new international order that was established to promote universal peace and economic stability rested on the so-called 'Bretton Woods Institutions, namely the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) now part of the World Bank (Hickel, 2012). Since the late 1980s, it became common to use the name Washington Consensus to refer to the neoliberal economic policies because the IMF, the WB and the WTO — all based in Washington — shaped and enforced economic policies to several developing countries (Sison, 2013). This was accomplished by offering the possibility to access to loans for development projects or to repay international debts only with a conditionality —the implementation of a set of SAPs — in other words, a series of radical economic changes that include tax reforms, deregulation and liberalization of trade. These reforms were promoted as means to increase the economic growth of the countries, however, in most of the cases, they fostered the interests of multinational corporations and brought to a reduction of economic performances and to widespread social inequalities (Hickel, 2012).

Some assumptions of neoliberalism can be summarized as following: first of all, a free market will promote economic growth and hence improve the general welfare. This leads to

one of the fundamentals beliefs of market fundamentalism which is that economic growth will reduce poverty in two ways, by spreading the accumulated benefits through a trickle down process that will reach the poorest people; and by raising the average income of the poor. Secondly, a free market will foster intense competition that in turn will bring to higher quality of goods, spread of technology, innovation and better production techniques. Lastly, as markets will be more efficient and responsive, they will be more resistant to economic shocks. (Baumol, 2002; Borrás Jr., 2007). According to neoliberalism, deregulation and privatization will also bring to several benefits. Some examples can be: a decrease of the spread of corruption as the private sector will seek for more efficiency and will implement more checks and controls; diminution of the public debt as the State will earn from selling the industries and will spend less for running of the service. Moreover, privatization is believed to have a beneficial impact on services and on job creation because an increase in the efficiency will bring to cheaper and better services; and private investments will contribute to expand the economy and foster employment generation (Kalejaiye, et al., 2013; Pietrogiovanna, 2009).

4.3 Elite Theory

Elite theory is part of a group of paradigms that were developed to study the distribution of power in a State or in an organization⁹. One of the reasons that brought many scholars to conduct power structure research was the ambition to find the causes of social inequalities in societies (Sola, 1993). Focusing their attention and studying the behavior of people in leadership positions in the various socio-political contexts, several researchers attempted to give an answer to some of the questions that have been the subject of much debate since the ancient times, that is ‘Who governs? Who benefits?’ (Duru, 2012; Vergara, 2013).

The theory revolves around the concept of power understood primarily as a mean of domination over people. More specifically, it focuses on understanding the consequences of imbalances of power and the role that elites play in governing modern societies (Tancher, 2000). In their point of view, the distribution of power follows the zero-sum game logic, in other words the more power one possess, the less is left for others. By taking this fact as the foundation of

⁹ Domhoof (2006) identified five distinct approaches to analyze the power structure of a state: *State Autonomy Theory*, in which the government is the center of political power; *Pluralism* which suggests that power is fragmented and scattered into several centers of power; *Elitism* (or elite theory) that claims that every organization is controlled by a limited number of people; *Marxism* that argues that the basis of power resides in the economy and that the society can be divided into social classes; and lastly *Class Domination Theory*.

their theory, elitist concluded that the source of social inequalities must be sought where there are large concentrations of power (Sola, 1993).

The origin of the elite paradigm is attributed to the studies conducted by two Italian sociologists, Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca (Duru, 2012). These two scholars, together with Robert Michels who contributed to expand the theory, are considered by many as the 'fathers' of classic elitism (Ibid.). Mosca's ideas and contribution in the field of sociology are contained in his main work *The Ruling Class* published in 1896; that along with laying the basis of the elite theory, it can also be considered as the first attempt to form a general method to study a distribution of power (Sola, 1993). The Italian sociologist, by observing Italy's elite's social role and how they exerted their influence on the society, deduced that every type of social structure (e.g. a State, society) can be divided into two classes of people: the elites and the masses. The former is always formed by a small number of people that is able to control most of the functions of a society because it holds the majority of wealth and power. This domination of resources allows the elite group to not be subject to the control of other authorities. A larger number of people instead makes up the mass: this group follow the rules imposed by the first category and provides with their money and work, the means to operate the 'system' (Tancher, 2000; Sola, 1993). According to Tancher (2000), the category of the elite consist of large landowners, top politicians, bureaucrats, military officers and managers of large companies. In Mosca's point of view, everyone has a chance to be part of an elite, but the ones which have certain qualities, such as military distinction, scientific or religious knowledge or wealth, are more likely to have access to this exclusive group (Sola, 1993).

The theory was greatly developed in 1916 with the publishing of Vilfredo Pareto's masterpiece, *The Mind and Society*. Unlike Mosca, Pareto believed that because people do not have equal abilities, only the most gifted and competent ones, should be part of the group that takes the decision for the rest of the society (Brezis & Temin, 2008). The object of his study was mainly focused on how the class of elite forms and renews itself. He identified three main ways: by election as it happens in democracies, by right of birth, and through direct appointment (Sola, 1993). With the concept of 'circulation of elites' he claimed that to in order to have an efficient elite group at the head of a government or of an organization, there must be a change in the positions of power, or as he called it, a circulation of elites. Only when social mobility is guaranteed, the most talented and capable elements of a society have the possibility to access to positions in the ruling class. Hence, according to Pareto, organizations that renew their administration through nepotism or by hereditary mechanisms, over time are likely to result in weak and inefficient leaderships (Addo, et al., 2012).

The German sociologist Robert Michels introduced one of the fundamental concepts of elitism. He developed the theory known as *The Iron Law of Oligarchy* which claims that gradually all types of organizations will develop an oligarchy which will hold most of the decision-making power. This law also applies to democratic governments in which the people elect their representatives, but the effective governance and all decisions are taken by a limited group of people. It is therefore clear that the quality and efficiency of a government or organization, depend on the ruling class that is elected (Higley, s.d.; Brezis & Temin, 2008). According to many advocates of this theory, through democracy a group of people is legitimized to govern, but when eagerness prevail, they often seek to increase their wealth and power. They do so through corruption or by promoting public policies that mainly generates benefits for the ruling class and prominent entrepreneurs at the expense of the rest of the society (Sola, 1993; Duru, 2012). Given the great influence exerted by the elite on political and economic decisions, it can be said that the development of a country can be undermined by selfish and corrupt behaviors of the leadership. Elitists are very skeptical about the possibility of a country to achieve a power structure that reflected the ideals of a perfect democracy (Sola, 1993).

Summing up the thoughts and the various contributions of several scholars, it is possible to identify the following main assumptions of the elite theory:

- Elite families tend to use political power to benefit themselves and their supporters. Often public policy reproduces private preferences rather than the collective good (Brillo, 2011)
- The control of resources, capital and key social institutions such as the government and industrial corporations, allows elites to influence social, political and economic policy making and hence enhance their power (Tancher, 2000); (Farazmand, 1994).
- All kind of social organizations develop elites. A society is always divided into two categories: the rulers that are the ones who hold the power and the ruled (the masses) that are subordinated to it (Tancher, 2000).
- There must be an impartial renewal and circulation of elite to have a stable and efficient economic system (Brezis & Temin, 2008).
- All political organizations are ruled by an oligarchy. There is always a small number of people that holds authority and decision-making power (Brezis & Temin, 2008); (Wamsley & Zald, 1977).

Concluding, when the influence of elite families and important business leaders interfere with the smooth functioning of the government, this often has two consequences: first of all, the formation of a weak state due to the weakening of the effectiveness of the governance. Because the state is unable to adequately fulfill its functions, this may adversely affect the development of a country and how it resolve a displacement emergency. The second consequence is a spread of corruption: the thirst for wealth and more power, leads the elite to buy political influence or to make use of unfair methods, such as bribery and favoritism, to exploit economic opportunities and increase their profits. Corruption is therefore one of the many methods by which resources that are meant for the society are taken away illegally contributing in to increase the level of poverty (and vulnerability) of a country.

Given the strong link that can exists between the ruling class and dishonest or fraudulent activities and because corruption is a dominant feature of the Philippine political system, the next section will introduce some of the main notions of corruption that are going to be useful during the analysis. With these concepts, it will be easier to understand how elites can destroy livelihoods and undermine post-disaster recoveries and the social-economic structure of a country.

4.3.1 Notions about corruption

Among all the factors that may affect the economic and social development of a country, undoubtedly the level of corruption plays a fundamental role. The concept of corruption is made by so many aspects and it has been applied to so many situations that there is no universally definition accepted by all (Vargas-Hernández, 2009). However, it is clear that when we refer to corruption, what we have in mind is a set of (dishonest) behaviors that constitute criminal offences (Morris, 2011). The most commonly used definition is the one provided by Transparency International (2010b) which defines it as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (p. XI). This definition requires two clarifications: firstly, the term ‘private’ refers not only to individuals but also to more people like organizations, families or political parties. Secondly, the gain is not seen only in economic terms but it could also be an increase of the reputation (Ibid., p.XI). Usually corruption is associated with an action that occurs within a bureaucratic setting, in that case the definition can be expanded to "abuse of public office for private gain and the abuse of public power for private benefit" (Vargas-Hernández, 2009, p. 1). According to Vargas-Hernández (2009), corruption can occur in many forms, but the most

widespread ones are: bribery; extortion; embezzlement and theft; favoritism; collusion; and fraud.

Corruption can be determinant factor in the generation of displacement risk as it affects the life and the livelihood of most of the Filipinos in a number of ways. First of all, it can strongly affect the well-being of people by limiting their access to education and healthcare because funding aimed at improving the education system or the distribution of medicines are often diverted into private bank accounts (Transparency International, 2010). Actions of this kind contribute to slow down the development of a country and increases the vulnerability of the poorest part of the population. Moreover, one of the worst damages made by corruption is the illicit appropriation of relief-emergency funds in the aftermath of a natural disaster. These fraudulent acts are usually exacerbated during crisis by the sudden allocation of large sums of money and the momentary dissolution of institutions in the country (Transparency International, 2010b). The last key aspect to consider is the fact that corruption can reduce the effectiveness of operations implemented to adapt to climate change. Research proved that those who suffer the most from the effects of climate change are the rural and urban poor, IDPs and people living in remote locations, which are those who are less able to adapt or have fewer resilience capacities (Transparency International, 2011). In many countries of the world, there is a great infiltration of corruption in the forestry sector, mainly in the form of illicit concessions and illegal logging. These two types of corrupt activities very often contribute to increase the environmental degradation that in turn raises the risk of natural hazards such as landslides and floods (Ibid., p.300). It is therefore crucial to prevent the misappropriation or the misuse of funds or investments aimed at climate adaptation and mitigation projects such as reforestation and carbon trading.

5 Economic and political factors as drivers of displacement risk

5.1 Structural Adjustment Programs: Overview and the Philippines' experience

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) are a series of economic policies that have been promoted by the two Bretton Woods institutions, namely the World Bank and the IMF. The SAPs were enforced to developing countries as a condition to receive loans — called Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs) — with the aim to sustain the restructuring of their economies (WHO, 2015; Bello, 2005). The emergence of the SAPs can be traced back to the beginning of the 1980s when these economic policies were prescribed to contain the ‘third world debt crisis’ that arose following the OPEC’s (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) 1973 oil embargo. During the embargo the price of the oil skyrocketed. This situation forced developing countries, included the Philippines, to borrow money from International banks so that they could buy the petroleum needed to sustain their industries. This borrow-lend process continued for years until the interests of the loans rose to a point that most of the third world countries found themselves unable to repay their massive debts. In order to ensure the repayment, the WB and the IMF stepped in advocating a problem-solving idea. They believed that the restructuring of the debtor states’ economies through the use of SAPs would have generated higher economic growth rates by increasing their exports, and thus allow them to clear the debt (Dasgupta, 1997; Hickel, 2012; Bello, 2005). The Structural Adjustment Loans (SAL) needed for the reorganization of their economies were granted to a country only after that the government agreed to implement a series of economic reforms in line with the neoliberal agenda. These reforms included (but were not limited to) the liberalization of trade, the deregulation of the economy, a reduction of social spending (e.g. on healthcare and education), the privatization of state industries, a currency devaluation and lower tariffs on imports (WHO, 2015; Bello, 2005). In Hickels’ (2012) opinion, the two Bretton Woods institutions “leverage debt as a tool for manipulating the economies of sovereign states”. The economic policies promoted by the SAPs were underpinned by the neoliberal belief that economic growth and development could be best achieved only through an efficient allocation of resources made by an unrestricted market; the free flow of goods and capital in the market, and the handover of non-strategic public services to a private management. (Dasgupta, 1997, p. 1097). Because of their pivotal role in disseminating the export-led development strategy by enforcing neoliberal policies

globally, the WB and the IMF were defined as “the key institutions that translated the theory [neoliberalism] into policy” (Bello, 2009).

As previously said, in the early 1980s the Philippines were characterized by poor economic performance, rising unemployment, widespread poverty and a high foreign debt (Salehezadeh & Henneberry, 2002, p. 484). Therefore, as an attempt to overcome these problems, the Southeast Asian archipelago was one of the first countries to enforce the economic reforms recommended by the SAPs to reduce their debt deficit and integrate their economy with the rest of the world (Bello, 2005). Because SAPs and SALs became recurring features of every administration that led the country, the Philippines government was regarded by the international community as “the most pliant in Asia to the neoliberal prescriptions of the Washington Consensus” (Quimpo, 2003 as quoted in Holden, 2012, p.152). The main reforms that guided the country’s transition from import substitution and trade protectionisms to an outward-oriented development strategy based on the free market, were undertaken by three different presidents, namely Ferdinand Marcos (1966-86), Corazón Cojuangco-Aquino (1986-1992) and Fidel V. Ramos (1992-1998).

In 1980, under the Marcos administration the country received a first SAL of \$200 million from the WB and launched a trade and financial liberalization program. The reform package, focusing on eliminating the import restrictions and on cutting the import tariffs, made drastic changes in the country: in less than four years the nominal tariff rates were reduced from 43 to 28 percent and import limits were abolished on over 900 items (Bello, 2005; Montes, 1988, p. 146). The intent of these reforms was to increase productivity, boost the competitiveness in the international market and accelerate the development of export-oriented industries (Kajiwara, 1994, p. 496). Despite all these efforts, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate has steadily decreased over several years, reaching its lowest value of –7.31 in 1985 (USDA, 2015). Even though a group of influential business and political elites, which were hostile to the reforms, managed to convince president Marcos to cease the ‘liberalization process’, the WB continued to grant SALs that contributed to increase the public debt (Montes, 1988, pp. 146-147). The years under the Aquino administration were characterized by harsh austerity measures aimed at reducing the indebtedness accumulated during the Marcos era. Moreover, significant reforms were carried out like the Foreign Investment Act that granted 100 percent ownership of the investments to foreign investors and further lifted the restrictions on imports (Mercado-Aldaba, 1994, pp. 8-10). High unemployment rates, tax increases, public spending cuts imposed by the SAPs, and rapid population growth brought to a situation in which, in the early 1990s, 46.5 percent of the families lived under the poverty threshold of \$1.25 a day (Bello,

2005). With the election of Fidel V. Ramos in 1992, the implementation of the neoliberal agenda reached its climax. Under a development program named 'Philippines 2000' that aimed at reaching the status of Newly Industrialized Country (NIC) by the beginning of the new millennium, the government put at the core of every reform package policies directed to market deregulation, privatization of state industries and finance liberalization (Sayson, 2006). As a result, several of the main state-owned industries were progressively privatized: the water service in 1992, telecommunications in 1993, the banking sector in 1994 and finally airlines and oil in 1995 and 1996 respectively (Nicolas, 2004). This process of privatization was driven by the conviction that private ownership would increase the efficiency and the distribution of services to the population.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that during the various administrations that followed one another, the Philippines has signed several multilateral trade agreements. For example, they took part to the Association of the South East Asian Nations Free Trade Area (ASEAN-AFTA) whose membership required the reduction of the tariffs to 0-5 percent on all products (Bello, 2009). Moreover, in 1995 they joined the WTO that, like the two Bretton Woods Institutions, granted access to western markets only with a conditionality. In this case, such conditionality was the ratification of the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA). Since the Philippines agriculture contributed to a fifth of the national GDP and provided (and still provides) the livelihood for more than 50 percent of the population, the reforms imposed by the AOA had immense consequence on the Filipinos. For example, the AOA replaced the 'Magna Carta for small Farmers', namely a document that heavily restricted the importation of sensitive agricultural crops and thus protected small cultivators. In addition, the AOA imposed further cuts on tariffs rates and agricultural subsidies, as well as the lifting of trade barriers and modifications on the intellectual property rights regulations (Pascual & Glipo, 2001).

It was important to describe the Philippines' experience with the SAPs because these economic programs, by totally changing the country's development strategy, had an immense impact on the Philippine economy, on its society, and especially on the already fragile livelihoods of the majority of the Filipinos.

5.2 Analysis of the effects of the SAPs

To begin with, it is important to understand that poverty and disasters are highly correlated and mutually reinforce each other — poverty makes people more vulnerable to disasters and disasters push people more into poverty. The fact that poverty incidence can be considered as a major driver of disaster-related displacement was confirmed by the 2009 Global Assessment Report (GAR) which showed that disaster risk is disproportionately concentrated in lower-income countries (UNISDR, 2009, p. xiii). Further evidence was given by the fact that over 77 percent of the people displaced by Tropical Storm Sendong that hit the Philippines in 2011 were living below the poverty line of \$1.25 (Ginnetti, et al., 2013, p. 24). This last example suggests two things: firstly, people do not suffer disasters in the same way. In fact their exposure and vulnerability to a natural hazard vary depending on their social status, economic condition, age, gender and several other factors. Secondly, poverty reduction is a key component for reducing disaster and displacement risk. For these reasons, this research assumes that a deterioration of livelihoods or a reduction of the entitlements granted by a government often corresponds to an increase of vulnerability. This reasoning stems from the fact that poverty not only is likely to force people to live abusively in marginal disaster prone areas such as riverbanks, slums or on steep slopes, but also prevents them to improve their coping capacities against hazards (Arnold & de Cosmo, 2015, p. 6). Examples of coping capacities and mitigation measures are the diversification of livelihoods, the making the house damage-resistant, insurances, personal knowledge and skills, the development of protecting devices like barriers (Natural Hazard Center, 2001).

After making these considerations, I concluded that one of the possible ways to analyze how SAPs have influenced the vulnerabilities of Filipinos is to study how the economic reforms implemented by the government affected the lives and resources available to the population. An analysis focused on the relation between economic policies and resources is highly relevant for studying the concept of vulnerability because, as Moser points out, when a hazard strikes “the means of resistance are the assets and entitlements that individuals, households, or communities can mobilize and manage in the face of hardship. Vulnerability is therefore closely linked to asset ownership” (Moser 1998 as quoted in Prowse, 2003). It is clear that better living conditions give to individuals the possibility to improve their coping capacities and decrease their exposure to disaster risk. Consequently, it is fair to say that the reforms implemented by the Philippine government following the SAPs shaped, and are still shaping, the level of

vulnerability of Filipinos by increasing or reducing the set of resources and assets that the population needs for withstanding and bouncing back hazards.

It is widely acknowledged that the Philippines is one of the countries with the highest poverty incidence and level of inequality in Southeast Asia (ADB, 2009). It could be argued that a source of disaster risk and vulnerabilities could arise from the fact that the government is not giving enough attention to the poverty issue. Considering that the Macapagal-Arroyo Administration's development strategy was built around the aim of fighting poverty¹⁰ (NEDA, 2013) and that the current President Aquino's 2011-2016 development plan states that poverty reduction "is the highest order objective to which all development interventions in the plan should contribute to" (NEDA, 2011, p. 4), it can be said that the Philippines consider poverty reduction as a fundamental component to achieve development and puts this matter at the top of its agenda. However, a government's commitment, in order to be translated into reality, must be supported by an effective and inclusive development strategy. If this does not occur, not only the problem cannot be solved, but may also be worsened. In fact, as Baulch and Hoddinott (2000, p. 19) pointed out "governments themselves are often source of shocks to households. This comes about through the way governments influence the economic, legal and political settings within which the household is embedded. Poor macroeconomic policy [...] leads to deterioration in livings standards". As said, in the context of this thesis, is assumed that a worsening of living standards leads to greater vulnerabilities.

The fact that since the early 1980s the Philippines embarked in a process of economic restructuring with the implementation of the policies prescribed by the SAPs, shows that the country relied on a market-driven development strategy to escape from their state of underdevelopment. Two statements can support this claim: the first one from the Governor of the Bank of the Philippines that declared "there is no substitute to global opening and integration as the way to jump start our economy out of poverty" (De Ocampo, 1997); the second one from the WB that stated, "[SAPs] are a necessary [effort] if the country is to continue to make reasonable progress towards its development goals"¹¹ (The World Bank, 1980, p. 6). Hence, it is clear that the Bretton Woods institutions and the Philippine government had complete faith in the fact that the expansion of the economy would have led to an improvement in human welfare. It can be argued that the development strategy pursued by the Philippines

¹⁰ The Arroyo's Development Plan focused on creating 10 million jobs, improving the access to education, improving better housing for poor people and on tackling the issue of food insecurity (Neda, 2013)

¹¹ From the World Bank' Loan proposal to the Philippines (The World Bank, 1980).

reflects the neoliberal assumption which contends that economic growth will reduce poverty by spreading the accumulated benefits to the poorest people through a trickle-down process. In other words a market-distribution of wealth. Therefore, as an unequal distribution can lead to higher vulnerabilities, it is very relevant to analyze if the policies implemented by the Philippine government fulfilled the expectation of economic growth and poverty reduction.

According to Gonzalez & Manasan (2002, p. 173) and to the data provided by the WB (2012), the economy of the Philippines has been characterized by boom-bust cycles. In the period 1991-2012, because of its modest GDP growth rate (an average of 3.9 percent¹²) the economy underperformed compared to the other Southeast Asian countries (Ibid.). This data suggest that the neoliberal reforms implemented through the SAPs did not produce the high economic growth rates that were promised by the free market. Moreover, the government has failed to significantly decrease the level of poverty in the country. Data confirms this claim: considering the 1991-2012 period, the poverty incidence had a decline of 9.2 percent (from 34.4 percent to 25.2 percent). However, as the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) report points out, because of the rapid population growth (2.12 percent) even though there has been a slight reduction in the poverty incidence, the absolute number of poor people had an increase of 2 million people (from 21.75 to 23.75 million) (NSCB, 2013). These figures place the Philippines at the first place among the ASEAN 5¹³ with the highest poverty incidence (Gonzalez & Manasan, 2002, p. 174). Hence, it is evident that, contrary to what the SAPs predicted, a huge part of the population is not benefiting from the prosperity generated in the country. In other words, the market-driven distribution of wealth failed to reach the poorest part of the population. Consequently, it can be said that the Structural Adjustment Programs did not contribute to diminish the vulnerabilities of the poorest strata of the population. Despite the evidence that the gap between poor and rich is getting wider and thus exacerbating the vulnerabilities of fragile communities, "the development paradigm continues to be based fundamentally on economic growth, [...] overconsumption of natural capital and the production of inequality" (ISDR, 2015, p. 180). Economic growth is definitely a fundamental component to diminish poverty, but it has to be driven by pro-poor policies and not from mere thirst for enrichment. By putting GDP growth at the center of every developmental initiative, states and multilateral institutions are tackling the symptoms and not the causes of poverty and vulnerability.

¹² Several economic shocks (1984-1985; 1991 and 1998) and natural disasters humped the GDP growth rate (Gonzalez & Manasan, 2002).

¹³ ASEAN 5 refers to the five founding members of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

One of the several ways by which a government can ensure better living conditions to the most vulnerable segments of the society, is by establishing proper and targeted social protection programs like safety nets, provision of subsidies or insurance mechanisms. In the Philippines, these state-run protection schemes are extremely important mainly for two reasons: firstly, because most of the poor households are not able to adequately reduce disaster risks by its own means and secondly, they prevent the transient poor to fall into the state of chronic poverty. According to Haque (2008) the formation of the neoliberal state has seriously undermined the efficiency and the scope of these state-run programs. In fact one of the main characteristics of the State¹⁴ that emerged from the reforms imposed by the SAPs, is its anti-welfare position (Ibid.). This feature emerges from the neoliberal belief that inefficiencies in the market are due to an excessive government public expenditure and state intervention. Gloyd (2004, p. 43) sums up well this fact by describing the views of the WB and IMF: “the Washington consensus holds that economic growth is the main goal of development and that growth should always be facilitated even at the expense of social service”. Therefore, as a result of the reforms promoted by the SAPs, also the Philippines has implemented a drastic reduction of the public spending. The expenditure cuts were carried out mainly through a reduction of the public employees and with a compression of the budget devoted to social services programs. Essentially, the government aimed to reduce its role of welfare provider and to compensate the ‘gaps’ through a distribution of goods and services made by the market and by private entities (Haque, 2008, pp. 12-14). Because of these cuts in the welfare system, many Filipinos belonging to the lowest social strata have been unable to benefit from subsidies provided by the state. For example, budget reductions put a strain on the lives of Philippine farmers because many of them, due to the instability of the agricultural sector, depended on state aids. This dependency is given by the fact that recurring disasters such as drought, floods and typhoons, often jeopardize the livelihood of many farmers and thus force them to sell productive assets to address their consumption needs (NEDA & UNDP, 2014). Therefore, safety nets are an indispensable resource to mitigate disaster risks and to offset the consequences caused by the damage to the crop. However, despite the importance of this social protection program, the Philippine government is not investing enough to safeguard the welfare of the farmers. In fact, a study conducted by the ADB (2013) revealed that the country spends only 1 percent of its GDP for safety nets¹⁵. Undoubtedly, this underinvestment increases the displacement risk of a huge part

¹⁴ Haque calls this State the neoliberal State.

¹⁵ The same study reveals that the Philippine expenditure is extremely low compared to what the US and the EU spend for their safety nets. In fact they spend 9 percent and 19 percent of their GDP respectively.

of the population. Moreover, the combination of budget limitations and inefficiencies in the service management inevitably leads to a deterioration in wellbeing and increased vulnerability of many Filipinos. A good example is given by the social service program in charge of the distribution of rice subsidies which, due to the inadequate service provided, exacerbates the susceptibility to disasters of poor people. In fact, half of allocated rice is lost due to the rampant corruption, and the target of the program is not accurate as it includes more than 65 percent of non-poor, leaving out a large portion of those in real need (Ibid., p. 15). A well targeted and effective distribution of food subsidies is extremely important in the Philippines due to the widespread problem of food security and malnutrition. According to a study conducted by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), in 2012 an estimated 10.4 percent of Filipinos (that translates into 7.5 percent of the total families) were not able to meet the basic food needs (NSCB, 2013, p. viii). Because of their weak physical condition, very often people who suffer from lack of food security are unable to work and therefore are trapped into a poverty-vulnerability spiral that further expose them to the risk of displacement.

The austerity measures implemented by the government also significantly reduced the amount of financial resources allocated to the educational system. Because of the cuts in the distribution of government subsidies and due to the introduction of user charges for services, a growing number of poor families are not able to send their children to school (Manasan, et al., 2008). The budget invested by the Philippine in the education, not only declined from 3.81 percent in 1998 to 2.64 percent in 2009 but it is also very inadequate considering that the UN suggests to allocate yearly 6 percent of the GDP (United Nations, 2015). To have a comparison, Denmark in 2011 spent 8.74 percent of its GDP (Ibid.). As Manasan et al. say (2008, p. 1), access to education is "a key ingredient in breaking the cycle of poverty" because allows individuals to develop their full potential and increases their chances to secure a source of income. Therefore, it implies that education can also be conducive for reducing vulnerabilities. In fact, according to UNESCO (2015), schooling produce more resilient individuals by enabling them to develop survival skills, critical thinking and problem solving. The fact that climate change is expected to increase the number of disaster in the future and that the population of the country is growing very fast makes the issue of underinvestment even more alarming.

Lack of funds for social programs and for investments in the infrastructures can also be due to national budget shortages. In the Philippines, it appears that the burden of debt repayment and the reduction of the power of the state in collecting tax revenues are constraining the country's ability to deliver effective social services (IBON Foundation, 2009). As previously said, SALs were meant to facilitate the debt repayment to international creditors and were

granted only under certain conditions. Using WB's words "the proposed loan would be disbursed into two tranches [...] the first tranche of \$100 Million [...] the second tranche of \$95 Million would be available on January 31, 1981, if progress in liberalizing import licensing and realigning tariffs will be satisfactory" (The World Bank, 1980, p. 5). This statement clearly shows that loans were available to the Philippines only on an objective-fulfillment basis and were conditioned to the implementation of reforms that facilitated the integration of the market into the international system. In reality, after few years of implementation, SALs lost their 'time bounded program' feature and were granted, with increasing ease and frequency, also during periods without crises (Sayson, 2006, p. 54). This has led to a situation in which, along with a growing number of loans to finance projects — mainly development projects and reconstruction support programs post-disasters — the debt that the country owed to the international institutions constantly escalated. According to Dasgupta (1997, p. 1097), the Bretton Woods Institutions' support is not temporary because it establishes a mechanism in which to a loan, always follows a new one, thus it becomes very difficult to break free from this 'loan dependence'. In other words, developing countries are caught in a situation in which because of the high interest rates, debt repayment becomes impossible, at least in the short term. For example, the Philippines, in the last 4 decades, received loans for \$115bn, but, despite having disbursed \$132bn in payments and interests, it still has an obligation of \$60bn with international creditors (Jones, 2013). Basically, the Philippines are paying a debt by borrowing other money.

Moreover, SAPs also had the effect of inhibiting one of the government's fundamental functions, namely the one of collecting tax revenues (Fieldman, 2011, p. 166). The ratification of the AOA and the fiscal adjustments required to join the WTO demanded a drastic reduction of the import tariffs and custom duties, and thus significantly reduced the country's financial resources. These two facts, the repayment of the 'never ending' debt that drains every year a huge part of the national budget, together with the uncollected revenues from the reduction of import tariffs, indicate that the government is not only losing a huge source of income, but it is also missing a useful chance to minimize vulnerabilities. For example, it can be said that these resources could have been used by the government to improve the delivery of the social services, develop infrastructures and invest in disaster risk reduction measures. Investments in early warning systems, mitigation plans and capacity building are only some of the activities that could help to decrease displacements. In regards to the DRR measures implemented in the Philippines, an assessment conducted on the Disaster risk management (DRM) showed that in 2013 the government allocated 52 percent of its DRR budget for disaster response and only 36

percent for preparedness (Commission on Audit, 2014, pp. 20-21). These data point out that the government implements more a reactive strategy rather than one of prevention, in other words it acts after that a hazard strikes. A preventive approach, that is investing before the hazard occurs, could save many more lives and reduce displacement (UNDP, 2015).

Much can be said about the Philippine infrastructure network. Borras Jr. (2007) claims that a major cause of poverty in the country can be attributed to the failure of the government to develop the necessary infrastructures to sustain the expansion of the economy. In fact, comparing to its neighbors, the Philippines has one of the most underdeveloped infrastructure system (Ibid., p.164). The neoliberal reforms were conducive, in this underinvestment, by forcing the government to lift the law that required foreign companies to reinvest part of their profits in the country (Gloyd, 2004, p. 49). An Inadequate infrastructure network due to underinvestment, severely limits the opportunities for development of many Filipinos and this fact in turn reduces the strength of their coping capacities. As emphasized by the WB (2005, pp. 141-142), in a country like the Philippines, in which over half of the population depends on the agricultural sector and lives in rural areas, market access, road, and support for irrigation are of vital importance to enable the population to sustain themselves and progress. Not to forget that for every disaster that occurs in the country, the damages of the catastrophe may amplify the inefficiencies of the infrastructures, further undermining the livelihoods of the Filipinos.

All things considered, the SAPs affected in several ways the vulnerability of the Filipinos. First of all, the economic restructuring that aimed at boosting the economy, did not translate into an equal distribution of the benefits generated by the market. This situation further exacerbated the gap between rich and poor. Secondly, SAPs, by imposing tariff reductions and by allowing foreign investors to keep 100 percent of the returns from their investments, decreased the revenues of the Philippine government. The tight budget led to underinvestment in infrastructure and in the education. Thus, Filipinos had fewer opportunities to improve their wellbeing and their coping capacities. Lastly, the anti-welfare position of the market, by reducing the amount of money allocated for safety nets and subsidies, deprived the poor strata of the population of an important source of income and protection. Therefore, undermined their food security and their means of resistance against hazards.

5.3 Deforestation in the Philippines

To have a clear understanding of the situation of the Filipino people, constantly subjected to natural hazards and displacements, it is necessary to consider and analyze the consequences of deforestation in the Philippines. According to the Kyoto Protocol¹⁶, deforestation is defined as “the direct human-induced conversion of forested land to non-forested land” (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 12). Researcher van den Top (2010, p. 6) improves such definition, specifying that a given forest may be subject to two different processes: a complete removal of vegetation and its conversion to other forms of land uses (forest clearing), or a partial but significant reduction of its crown cover (forest degradation), which can be either a temporary or a permanent loss but in both cases negatively affects the function of the site. Therefore, with the term deforestation he refers to changes in crown cover as the combined result of forest clearing and forest degradation. In this thesis, I will refer to this second meaning as it is more detailed than the first one.

Tropical forests have a key role in the preservation of the global environmental stability. In fact, their ability to absorb and store carbon is fundamental for maintaining a balanced amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, therefore to avoid the aggravation of the greenhouse effect (Prentice, 2001, p. 187; Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 11). It has been demonstrated that tropical forest deforestation is responsible for approximately 20 percent of world greenhouse gas emissions (Fearnside & Laurance, 2004). Aside from this global issue, tropical deforestation has an extreme impact on local basis and its consequences are visible in relatively short times. Studies have shown that the rapid process of forest reduction causes the soil to lose its strength and therefore, especially during heavy rainfalls, it contributes to the formation of landslides¹⁷. In fact, trees are able to support the slope since their roots absorb water from the ground and anchor into solid stratifications, providing soil firmness. But, once the trees are cut down, the stability of the ground is at risk (Sharma & Ram, 2014, pp. 40-42). Other dramatic consequences of deforestation are the likely abundance of floods and the loss of coastline protection due to the destruction of coastal mangroves, which form a shield against hurricanes (McKenna & Bleck, 1996).

The archipelago of the Philippines has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world as its tropical rainforest cover decreased by over 10 million ha over the last 70 years

¹⁶ The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement that sets internationally binding emission reduction targets. It was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997 (UNFCCC, 2014)

¹⁷ Gravitational movement of rocks, detritus or soil down a hillside.

(Carandang, et al., 2013). This situation has led to significantly catastrophic difficulties for a large part of the Filipino population. The values of these hardships differ in different areas of the country, but all have a common feature: a high displacement risk and loss of lives. Often one disaster leads to another: sizable windstorms are followed by floods and mudslides, earthquakes by landslides and so on (The World Bank, 1990, p. 4). In fact numerous environmental cataclysms related to deforestation continue to occur, resulting to miseries and sufferings to the population (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 21). Evidences can be seen in the report of the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) of the Philippines which has collected data concerning displaced people over the past few years. For the year 2010 alone, in the Caraga region, more than 20 people died and over 260,000 were forced to leave their homes and means of livelihood as a result of floods and landslides that were consequences of deforestation. Damages were numerous as croplands, roads and power lines were wiped out causing disabilities for the survivors. But, these climate disasters are not confined to only one part of the country. In fact, in the same year, in the regions of Eastern Visayas and Bicol thousands of people were displaced, around 1,500 families and 400,000 people respectively. The number of displaced families in the whole Philippines is 118,728 for the year 2010 alone (GOVPH, 2011).

Direct drivers of deforestation	%
Legal / Illegal logging	40.58
Agriculture expansion	21.05
Natural hazards	13.75
Infrastructure expansion	10.19
Charcoal making	8.15
Fuelwood gathering	4.41
Others	1.87
Total	100

Table 2 Direct Drivers of Deforestation in the Philippines. Based on Carandang, et al., 2013 p.33.

The table shows the direct drivers (also called proximate causes) that cause a high rate of deforestation in the Philippines. All the causes of deforestation except for natural hazards are due to a direct human intervention and among them wood extraction is definitely the most influential action (40.58 percent). It is known that the Philippine archipelago (approximately 7,100 islands for a total land area of 299,400 km²) was 90 percent forested before the Spanish colonization, for an estimate of about 27 million ha of forest cover (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 19; Liu, et al., 1993, p. 2). As the Spaniards conquered the country in the middle of the 16th century, logging activities began to be very extensive since the colonial rule highly demanded timber for exports and vessel manufacture. At the turn of the twentieth century, when the American Colonial rule began, the Philippine forest cover was already reduced to 70 percent. The Americans introduced the first modern logging activity by establishing nationwide operating sawmills and logging companies, which used to gain renewable logging concessions from the government through Timber License Agreements (TLA) (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 20; Liu, et al., 1993, p. 2). The TLA system, which highlights a tight bond between the State and the private sector, reached its maximum expansion in the 1970's, when the government allowed TLA holders to engage in legal timber extraction in more than two thirds of the public forest land (ITTO, 2006, p. 181). As a result, over 170,000 ha of forests was destroyed annually. The research conducted by Mayo-Anda and Torres (2014) shows that the TLA mechanism was exploited by a restricted number of powerful landlords and political elite. It is demonstrated that forest extraction concessions were characterized by corruption and favoritisms. In fact, since the period of the Marcos administration (1965-1986), political and military actions were performed by an exclusive group of people with the aim of obtaining financial profits through the hoard of land concessions (Mayo-Anda & Torres, 2014, p. 5). The high rate of deforestation ultimately led to the present situation in which, as the official forestry statistics claimed, about 7 million ha of land is forested, of which only 0.8 million ha is regarded as primary original forest (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 22; ITTO, 2006, p. 179).

As previously indicated in the table, logging and illegal logging are the main human activities that caused and are still causing deforestation. Illegal logging is mainly prevalent in terminated or cancelled TLA areas that, with the end of logging concessions, are largely unprotected, hence less preservable (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 35). A closer look at the table shows that other key drivers that led to the increase of forest loss (therefore to the disaster-related displacement risk) are agricultural expansion, biophysical factors (which are both driving forces that consequences of deforestation), infrastructure expansion, charcoal making and finally fuelwood and non-timber forest products (NTFP) gathering. Studies have shown

that the agriculture expansion began to be an issue since the World War II, as a large part of the population took refuge in the forest and have paved the ground to make it cultivable (Liu, et al., 1993, pp. 2-3). These migrations increased throughout the years as more deforested areas became accessible and gave hope of stability and better living conditions to the poor. These factors led to a situation in which about one-third of the Filipinos live in the uplands¹⁸, the half of whom are farming on former forest lands (Ibid., p.3). In some cases these new settlements have been organized in a more judicial way by the creation of resettlement programs issued by the government but in both cases, legal or illegal migrations, the value of population movements is increasing with an annual grow rate of 2.8 percent (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 44; Guiang, 2001). Therefore, an even greater number of people will be at risk of disasters.

The extreme rate of deforestation of the Philippine rainforest and its direct impact on the Filipino population have raised lots of concerns among the international community. This led to international pressures on the Filipino government to address the problem. Moreover many NGOs and activists have worked to reach a significant change. In the past decades the Philippine government has enacted various laws and logging bans to respond to the deforestation issue. In fact the annual allowable cut for most timber concessions has been increasingly reduced over the years and log export was also restricted (Liu, et al., 1993, p. 3). The year 2011 has been extremely important because, along with a decree to promote reforestation, the Executive Order No. 23 (E.O.23) has definitely banned all logging operations in natural and residual forests (GOVPH, 2012).

5.4 Analysis of the Political Landscape-Deforestation Link

To clearly understand the proximate causes that led to deforestation in the Philippines, and therefore the fact that the country is very prone to disasters and to disaster-related displacement, it is fundamental to be aware of the underlying forces that led to this situation. In this analysis, by studying how political and economic factors relate to deforestation, I will attempt to establish the linkage between political environment and creation of vulnerabilities in the Philippines. In other words, provide ‘the missing piece’ that leads to the proximate causes of deforestation that have been extensively described in the previous section. This approach to the issue is coherent with Krummer’s statement: “Deforestation is most appropriately studied by a multidisciplinary

¹⁸ The uplands are defined as the territories equal to or greater than 18 percent slope (Carandang, et al., 2013).

approach which emphasizes the socio-economic and political environment in which the actual process of deforestation occurs” (Kummer in van den Top, 2010, p.5)

As previously said, deforestation in the Philippines increases the risk of disasters and consequently it raises number of people exposed to a potential displacement. This harmful situation is well known by the government, indeed it has approved various laws and decrees to avoid the aggravation of such delicate status. The E.O. No. 23 has previously been chosen in this thesis as an example of a relevant attempt for improvement made by the government. This decree was issued in February 2011 by President Benigno S. Aquino III, and consists in the total cease of any logging activities in the Philippines, with the except of timber harvesting from sustainable sources¹⁹ (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 90). By analyzing this decree with the use of the elite theory, it can be deduced that the enact of the order seems to be going in the opposite direction to the ideologies of such theory. In fact, the E.O. 23 denotes that the government's desire was to safeguard the tropical rainforest and consequently the life of a large number of people, renouncing to substantial gains derived from the wood market. This contradicts one assumption of the theory which states that often public policy reproduces private preferences rather than the collective good. However, a closer inspection shows that the definitive cease of log production actually lead to a harmful situation for a large part of the population. In fact, the E.O. 23 influenced the economic activity of areas dependent on timber harvesting by causing a major job loss, thus affecting the well-being of several people. These social implications were easily predictable by the government as logging bans made in the past caused similar situations, such as the loss of 34,000 jobs between 1987 and 1993 when the log cutting activity was reduced by less than its half (Guiang, 2001). Therefore, in agreement with the study conducted by Carandang, et al. it can be said that logging ban policies not only are not effective because they do not address the fundamental need of the people for livelihood, but also they diminishes people's coping capacities by reducing their resources. Moreover, the negative impact of E.O. 23 was easy to be expected, hence avoidable with an adequate and effective policy plan (Carandang, et al., 2013, p. 91). The research conducted by Mayo-Anda & Torres (2014) confirms that the issue is not the absence of laws but the lack of well-designed policies that fail to supply an alternative employment option.

Another adverse effect that was predictable with the issuing of the E. O. 23 is the increase of illegal logging activities, which cause more damage to the environment than past TLA extracting system because illegal cutters have short-term interests, hence they extract forest

¹⁹ The timber must come from forests that are organized in a way in which the harm to ecosystems is minimized and the productivity of the forest is maintained (CPET, n.d.).

products without a designed plan (Guiang, 2001). The rise of illegal logging can be considered as a direct consequence of the inadequate policy plan previously pointed out. Carandang et al. (2013) confirm this link by highlighting the fact that, after the commercial logging companies left because of the E.O. 23, freshly unemployed lumbermen and many upland residents easily fell into the illegal business because it seemed a straightforward way to profit and support themselves. In this way, the cycle of vulnerability continues to be perpetuated as deforestation causes a great risk for the same people who are logging and to all upland communities. However, it is crucial to specify that illegal logging is not carried out by all the population, but it is an activity performed by lumbermen that are hired by influential businesspeople and politicians. This claim can be confirmed by analyzing the research conducted by Van der Ploeg, et al. (2011) which is focused on the hierarchies that form within illegal logging organizations, in particular within the illicit timber harvesting society in the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park (NSMNP) in the Luzon Island. In 2005, when their research was conducted, the illegal logging activities that were already present in the park (since the area is protected, logging activities were already banned before the E.O. 23), contributed to the increase of dangerous floods and landslides in the area (Ibid. p.203). The authors of the study regarding NSMNP have shown that illegal timber extraction within the park was financed by seven prominent businessmen which were in many cases also registered as timber plantations owners, hence they were able to pass off as legal timber what in reality was illegal (Ibid., p.206). This counterfeit can be seen as a confirmation of an assumption of the elite theory, which claims that the interference of prominent business leaders and influential wealthy families can hinder the smooth functioning of the government and adversely affects the improvement of a given condition.

Another assumption of the elite theory is that the supremacy of an elite allows its members to avoid controls from other authorities, and to benefit from the subjected people under their control which provide with their work the means to operate the system. This can be confirmed by the research conducted in the NSMNP that points out the fact that, in an illegal logging system, although a chainsaw operator can earn a good income with his work, the majority of all profits is gained by the elite group of financiers (Ibid., p.210). These financiers operate through 'middlemen' which organize the timber extraction process and hire local workers for the tree cutting. Payment on consignment are locally provided to lumbermen for their work, but if illegal timber is confiscated by authorities, wages are not given. This situation can be seen as a strong patronage tie between the middlemen and the workers. Moreover, if illegal activities are discovered, lumbermen may be subjected to legal processes by the government, but the elite group of prominent investors, since are not directly involved in the field work, avoid

persecutions because are hardly traceable (Mayo-Anda & Torres, 2014, p. 7; van der Ploeg, et al., 2011, p. 207). This confirms the clear gap between the elite group and the workers as stated in the elite theory.

As previously shown, illegal logging activity is one of the proximate causes of deforestation in the Philippines, and hence it aggravates the level of vulnerability of a large part of the population. At the same time, the lack of knowledge concerning the impact of forest exploitation — both by tree cutting or agricultural expansion — leads to the fact that the issue is aggravated by the same settlers who are subjected to hazards. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the absence of alternative livelihood give little choice to these upland settlers, but to exploit forest resources. Very often, patrols from the Anti-Illegal Logging Task force (created with the E.O. 23) and the DENR's field personnel, which together have the role of monitoring the rainforest uncovering illegal activities, use the fact that people do not have any alternative livelihood as an excuse for their insufficient control. In fact some of these governments officials claim that upland settlers totally depend on timber revenues, therefore they allow them to continue illegal logging as a way to help them surviving. Van der Ploeg (2011) and several other researchers have discovered that the reality is indeed very different. It is clearly known that widespread corruption hides within the government personnel, and the pro-poor statement declared by the guards actually masks briberies and frauds within the illegal business (van der Ploeg, et al., 2011, p. 201; Carandang, et al., 2013; Mayo-Anda & Torres, 2014, pp. 6-7). The elite theory confirms that corruption is a typical method used by a restricted group of people to gain wealth and power, and to interfere with a correct functioning of the government. In fact, there are many examples of middlemen corrupting forest guards with large amounts of money in order to safely transport illegal timber outside the forest borders. Bribes, paid to avoid regulations and ensure high profits, have become obvious formalities, and entered into the mindset of people as processes taken for granted (van der Ploeg, et al., 2011, p. 208). This spread of corruption is a threat to the correct functioning of a society as it encourages the continuation of practices that increase the vulnerability of the poor, reduces the will to find a proper solution to the illegal logging problem, and increases the gap between those in power and those who are not.

By considering the colonial background that shaped the country, such as the past colonizers from Spain or America who first established the social network model based on elite authority, favoritisms and extended family patronage in politics and business, it is possible to understand the power relations existing in the Philippines. Control over forested areas has always been a tool for economic and political power. This can be seen during the Marcos

Administration (1965-1986), when the concessions of areas for timber extraction were used by the government to benefit supporters and reward loyalty, whilst political enemies were punished with the cancellation of timber agreements thus reducing their income (van den Top, 2010, p. 71; Mayo-Anda & Torres, 2014, p. 5). This method confirms an assumption of the elite theory which highlights the supremacy of elite groups in the political environment who have the possibility to reward their supporters and gain more authority. The high use of forest resources as means to gain authority in the political system enhanced the deforestation processes, and therefore, as previously said, contributed to create a high displacement risk for indigenous people and upland settlers.

In conclusion, another important consideration can be made starting from an elite theory's assumption. According to Mosca, everyone has the chance to be part of an exclusive elite group, but the ones with specific features, such as great wealth, military distinction, scientific or religion knowledge, are more likely to enter in the elite (Sola, 1993). This assumption can be supported by van den Top (2010) study on the worth of money in the Philippine politics. In his point of view, anyone with the ambition to undertake a career in politics by election must consider spending a high amount of money in order to be elected. The major cost factor is the distribution of cash among voters in order to buy their support (Ibid., p.242). This electoral system has colonial origins and its functioning has been previously demonstrated to be related to a system of elite authority. The fact that election campaigns have extremely high costs implies that not everyone can afford to run for a political position, therefore the elite assumption claimed by Mosca finds confirmation. Very often illegal logging revenue have been used to support candidate during elections which tighten the bonds between the rulers and the logging businessmen (Vitug, 1998). An example can be seen in the NSMNP illegal logging system, in which several financiers hold prominent political position in the province of Isabela (van der Ploeg, et al., 2011, p. 208). Therefore, it can be claimed that certain members involved in the Philippine politics are very likely to keep supporting somehow the process of illegal logging as closely linked to its own economic support. It is clear that, as long as there are close ties between political gain and profit from harvesting the timber, it will never be possible to eliminate the problem of deforestation and its consequences on the population.

Summing up, it can be said that the Philippine political landscape contributes indirectly to increase the displacement risk of the population in two ways: the first one, by promoting illegal logging through various forms of corruption for their personal gain (e.g. to raise money for electoral campaigns). The second one, by reducing the resources and assets available to the population that live in the premises of forests. Lack of alternative sources of livelihood as a

result of logging bans, can either push people more into poverty or force them to enter in the illegal logging business, thus perpetuating the logging - deforestation - vulnerability cycle.

5.5 Final Remarks

The analysis focused on analyzing how economic policies and deforestation shape and affect the vulnerability of Filipinos. As previously said, the research was mainly focused on studying the elements that were deemed to be the indicators of the general aspects that are at the base of displacement. However, some final remarks can be made on some aspects of the analysis and on other factors that can influence the level of displacement risk.

First of all, the investigation highlighted the importance of having a secure livelihood and having access to safety nets provided by the government. A person, the more options, assets or resources has at its disposal, the more it is able to improve its coping capacity. Coping capacity is defined as “the ability of people, organizations and systems, using available skills and resources, to face and manage adverse conditions, emergencies or disasters” (UNISDR, 2009b). As shown in the analysis, since the implementation of the SAPs, Filipinos experienced a drastic reduction of the subsidies provided by the government. This put a strain especially on the transient poor that, without governmental aid, face the risk of becoming chronically poor.

Secondly, the research studied in detail the possible causes that lead to increased risk of displacement before the occurrence of a disaster. However, it has been found necessary to introduce some key points of the post-disaster factors that contribute to the aggravation of the displacement issue. These factors are found in post disaster environment and are crucial for increasing the likelihood that a hazard will turn into a disaster. The economic reforms restricted several functions of the State, in particular the one of collecting tax revenues. Nevertheless, the government plays a fundamental role in the aftermath of disasters. In fact, along with an effective prevention program, the quality of the response in the aftermath of a disaster plays an important role in the overcoming future displacement issues. The government’s response must be able to minimize as much as possible the severity of a disaster's effects and should ensure durable solutions in order to end the displacement of IDPs. Durable solutions are defined as situations in which IDPs “no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are directly linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement” (Brookings, 2010, p. 5). If IDPs are not able to achieve durable solutions, they cannot enjoy a full recovery process and new vulnerabilities can arise.

As shown in the analysis, the government seems to have difficulties in securing durable solutions for the upland populations. In fact, they have rarely been provided with safe environments, durable livelihoods that not include deforestation activities (e.g. illegal logging, agriculture expansion), and good opportunities for life improvement such as education. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the Philippine government has in recent years focused more forces to adequately respond to a disaster. In particular, after the devastating typhoon Haiyan (2013) it has created a new administrative body, the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery (OPARR), which is directly focused on the right react in the aftermath of a disaster. OPARR has the role to plan and coordinate different entities, such as the government, non-government institutions, foreign supporters for development, and the public, reuniting all under the common aim to structurally rebuild communities and benefit affected people (OPARR, 2014). The results of this new administrative body are not yet quantifiable, but its creation can be seen as a positive step, a hope for improvement that could change in better the Philippine's IDP's situation

Lastly, the government efforts to contain disaster risk cannot be fully implemented if there are obstacles that prevent its proper work. Political and economic interests, widespread corruption and other illegal activities if not contained can ultimately lead to the formation of a weak-state, namely a country that lack the ability to perform core functions, such as the ones during emergencies (Rice & Patrick, 2008). It is crucial to be aware that the role of corruption in the Philippine politics is a key player in the malfunction of the government's operate. The large amount of corruption present in the illegal logging business has already been discussed in the analysis, however, bribery and other corrupt activities are widely present among other sectors of the Philippine governance. Former president of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has once stated “our political system has degenerated to such an extent that it's very difficult to live within the system with hands totally untainted” (Hutchcroft, 2008, p. 146). This statement highlights the widespread of corruption in the government and the fact that it is well known, but still not easy to avoid. Other well-known facts are the improper use of public capital and the manipulation of elections or governance plans (Ibid., p.145). In order to have a better picture of how corruption affects the displacement risk, it is necessary to understand why so much corruption is rampant within the Philippine government and how it directly affects the functioning of the post-disaster policies. The democracy of the Philippine is one of the oldest among the Asian countries, but powerful clans within the political environment have historically dominated legislative and economic relations at a local and nationwide level. These clan ties continue to affect the current political situation as those who in the past controlled the

political system, were able to pass on this power in their own elite group through constant actions of cunning. This has been possible thanks to their control on national funds and through high-level contacts which have been strengthened throughout the years with favoritisms (Atkinson, et al., 2011, pp. 2-7). The power in the hands of a few individuals can be deleterious when its actions are self-interest, and not for the public good. For example, corruption in the politic system directly influence the allocation of public good provisions following a hazard, and this results in the reduction of the remaining funds for the other places in need. Many studies have shown that clan ties between high-ranked politicians and local mayors are able to direct public funds in greater proportion towards the municipality linked to the clan, resulting in these municipalities having a greater amount of fund for the reconstruction and the allocation of displaced people rather than others that perhaps need it most (Atkinson, et al., 2011, p. 2). This leads to the knowledge that the government has to make some very important steps, such as the fight against corruption and private interests in the Philippines political system, in order to reach the solution of the post-disaster displacement issue. The government should assure that the well-being of the people is the primary consideration guiding all decisions during relief operations, and must prevent that corrupt and selfish interests jeopardize people's welfare. Fighting corruption means to avoid the formation of a weak-state, therefore to ensure a durable solution for the IDPs and help them to restore their coping capacities. The combination of these two factors will prevent the creation of new vulnerabilities and therefore diminish the level of displacement risk in the country.

6 Conclusion

With this research I have tried to emphasize the fact that disasters cannot be attributed only to the nature, in other words, it would be very reductive to blame only the ‘natural component’ of a disaster. Natural hazards definitely act as triggers of disasters but it is important to understand that vulnerabilities and disaster risk are largely shaped by economic and political factors. The aim of this thesis was to investigate some of the causes behind the high risk of disasters and try to understand the reasons that make the Filipinos still not able to adequately withstand natural disasters and avoid frequent displacements. Because of the complexity and broadness of the issue, it was deemed necessary to focus the inquiry only on some of the aspects that are affecting the displacement risk of the population. To give an answer to the research question, the analysis focused on two factors: the effects of the economic reforms implemented following the SAPs and the influence of the political environment in creating vulnerabilities through deforestation and corrupt practices. Both these factors were found to negatively affect the level of vulnerability of Filipinos.

The first factor has been selected after making a broad observation of the displacement issue, which has revealed that most of the people affected by displacement has some features in common, such as the low level of economic development. This shared aspect did suggest that the economic factor plays a role that weighs on the rate of vulnerability of individuals. For this reason, after discovering that the Philippines was one of the first countries that underwent an economic restructuring with of SAPs, it was decided to investigate at what level these economic reforms have affected the vulnerability of the population in the event of natural hazards. Through the lenses provided by neoliberalism, it was found that the reforms implemented by the government are limiting the coping capacities of the population to withstand disasters in several ways. The SAPs underpinned by the neoliberal principles have been implemented with the expectation to accelerate the development and reduce poverty. In reality, they heavily undermined and reduced the resources and assets available to Filipinos, thus they decreased their means of resistance against hazards. Better living conditions, access to education, efficient infrastructure network, right to entitlements and subsidies, are all necessary factors to build resilience to disasters, but in spite of their importance, they have been eroded by the neoliberal economic reforms. Hence, to give an answer to the first sub-question, the analysis proved that the SAPs negatively affected the vulnerability of the poorest strata of the Philippine population. Presumably, one of the reasons because the SAPs failed to produce the expected outcomes is that they follow a one-size-fits-for-all approach. In other words, they

are a set of policies that are applied to all countries in a similar way, rather than being specifically tailored based on the characteristics that differentiate one country from another, such as important socio-economic features. This is a clear example of a shortcoming of the SAPs system that certainly contributed to the exclusion of a large percentage of Filipinos from the benefits that an open and internationally integrated market can provide.

The second factor, deforestation has been selected for two reasons: the first one because environmental degradation and clearing are highly correlated to the disaster risk; the second one, because the legal and illegal logging industry are in many cases the source of income of political elite and prominent businesspeople, therefore have a crucial role in the political decision-making and in the effective enforcement of laws enacted to prevent disasters. The link between deforestation and disasters has initially been found in the great influence that the cutting of trees has on the fragility of the soil. This factor has been highlighted by placing clear examples of disasters like floods and earthquakes that are a direct result of the extensive deforestation occurred over the years, and by highlighting the great danger that the occurrence of these events have. To understand in detail the displacement issue, it has been necessary to seek the causes that led to the high rate of deforestation in the Philippines. These causes were divided into two sub-categories: the proximate causes (mainly carried out through concrete actions by people in the forest environment, such as logging, illegal logging and agriculture expansion) and the underlying forces, which are the wider problems, as they form the structure in which deforestation occurred and it continues to occur. These underlying forces are related and shaped by the economic and political environment. What has been found is that these underlying forces are difficult to identify, but they must be taken into account as even a small change within them can widely influence the displacement risk level. In more depth it can be said that the political landscape of the country has increased the vulnerability of the population, initially by promoting deforestation activities for commercialization and market growth, and thus increasing the disaster risk. Consequently, after realizing the negative consequences of deforestation, by implementing logging bans without providing alternative livelihoods in substitution to the timber extraction activity, they severely restricted the assets available to Filipinos and hence reduced their coping capacities. Moreover, the lack of alternative sources of income increased the risk of disasters by forcing people to sustain themselves through illegal activities such illegal logging. What has emerged from the research is that corruption in the Philippine political system plays a decisive role in deforestation, and this role has been strengthened over the years becoming even more difficult to eradicate due to its extension.

Therefore it can be said that the political landscape is contributing to enhance the vulnerability of Filipinos by fostering deforestation.

By answering to the two sub-questions, the hypothesis that was made following the formulation of the research questions, namely that *the outcomes of the Structural Adjustment Programs and the political landscape are negatively affecting the coping capacities of Filipinos, thus increasing their level of displacement risk*, has been confirmed. It is now possible give an answer to the main research question by saying that Filipinos are still not able to adequately withstand natural disasters and avoid frequent displacement because SAPs and the political landscape contributed in several ways to reduce their coping capacities and to increase their displacement risk and vulnerability to hazards.

Lastly, this research provides useful insights on the correlation between disasters and vulnerability and contributes to the understanding of how disaster risk, and thus, displacement risk, are shaped by economic and political factors in the Philippines.

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