

## “Knowing” From a Distance:

### An Improv(is)ed Dialogue About Constellations of Meaning

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#### **Abstract**

*Through a dialogical exchange about disasters, we explore the notion of “knowing” by drawing on our own experience and research about improvisation and disaster management. Locating our work within our positionalities as expatriate Filipino researchers of considerable distance/closeness from each other, we find, albeit serendipitously, how our improvisational methodologies can occur en route to, during, and in, the aftermath of crisis. Through reconstructions of the calamitous, we establish certain distances with the event itself, disaster victims, ourselves, and other improvisers of meaning such as media journalists. We propose that this network of knowing forms part of the constellational relationships of meaning-making about disasters.*

#### **1. Introduction**

We began this dialogic exchange with an explicit openness towards the idea of improvisation. Bianca and I share an interest in the emergent process of spontaneity and were eager to engage in a process of knowledge production wherein we were yet to find out how or what we were supposed to “know.” Bianca is a researcher in the field of disaster management organizations, and I have been engaged in thinking about education and research methodology. Bianca and I are both in the final stages of our PhD programmes. We

are both Filipinos and went to the same school but did not belong to the same year level and thus had very little opportunity to become more acquainted with each other. Nevertheless, we found ourselves linked by this previous experience. As we responded to the call of papers for this issue, we took this small relational foundation a step further. We also took the concept of “disaster” and improvisation as starting point that we might develop further.

We have both written about improvisation within our fields of interest and were eager to find out what we could collaboratively re-create. In her recent work (Villar, 2018), Bianca takes on disaster response teams’ enactment of improvisation in terms of a spectrum of deviance that ranges from ‘slight deviation’ to ‘total overhaul’ (p. 1). She stresses an important ethical dilemma regarding improvisation by citing the example of Costa Concordia wherein 30 people died after response teams carried out initiatives that digressed from official disaster response protocol. Thinking about improvisation in relation to saving lives created a more dangerous picture of improvisation than I had expected. My focus on improvisation lies in its role in the process of research, as I problematise the question of whether knowledge is something that can (or must) be pursued (Deterala, Owen, Su, Bamber, & Stronach, 2018). But there is also a sense of danger in this question that resonates with Bianca’s ethical issue about deviance, which I will turn to later.

As the initiator of this exchange, I (Sophia) took on a more active role in our enquiry, suggesting methodological ideas, writing prompts, and other contributions. However, we kept in mind that as well as writing about improvisation, we were also trying to enact it. We tried to keep a sense of collegial mutuality between us, being open to what our project could become whilst at the same time setting the topic of our exchanges within the scope of class privilege in relation to disaster and education. Dialogue, however, is a free-flowing interaction that does not begin with an agreed outcome (Bohm, 1996). Any appearance of coherence and agreement only came about in retrospect, and our initial agenda was not abandoned but became less central. As well as questioning our class privilege as enabling more access to education, we also consequently fragmented more coherent discourses about “knowing”. Our exchanges thus spilled over and took a direction towards methodological critique.

We find that this is only one deviation out of the other conceptual turns that have occurred throughout this piece. A slight deviation from Bohm’s critique of dialogue is another. Dialogues between me and Bianca occurred through non-traditional “face-to-face” channels.

As Bianca was then in Barcelona and I was in a city in the North West of England, we used email and video chat as channels that, in Bianca's words, are full of "noise," some of which might stem from the smorgasbord nature of our interaction. Most of what are written down are a mixture of edited and untouched emails, diary entries, and even Facebook messages.

Although speaking before the turn of the millennium, Bohm (1996, p. 1) expresses a disdain of the current proliferation of channels of communication:

During the past few decades, modern technology, with radio, television, air travel, and satellites, has woven a network of communications which puts each part of the world into almost instant contact with all the other parts. Yet, in spite of this worldwide system of linkages, there is, at this very moment, a general feeling that communication is breaking down everywhere, on an unparalleled scale.

The above description is still a good fit with the historical and social context wherein our recent conversations occurred. However, Bianca and I worked together in a way that resists the ironic blend between miscommunication and an increasingly connected world. We also concede that these instances of (missed) communications form part of our (mis)understandings.

Sharing Bohm's aversion from typical assumptions about connectivity, Buchanan disagrees with unproblematic analogy of similarities between the internet and the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Contending that 'Google searches are very far from disinterested', Buchanan (2007, p. 12) suggests that the rhizome is too intricate a mess for the capitalist activities spun in the world wide web. In this paper, we highlight such kinds of interestedness, not only in the way social and mass media can convey knowledge. We also try to bring to the surface our own reified conceptions about learning. Through our attempts to make the same kind of reflexive deviation from our familiar ways of understanding, we did not arrive at a more singular, straight conception about the range of ideas within our enquiry (e.g., a more corroborated definition of disasters or improvisation), but realised that our exchanges moved towards what we term a "constellational" form of shared knowledge. We adopted this metaphor, as our exchanges occurred from various vantage points expressed as perspectives, translations, subjects, disciplines, or identities – our constellational "stars." We also did not always agree, another one of our digressions from parallel understanding. These various

points, although producing incohesive and incompatible knowledg-es, help us create a pattern of meaning which is open to rethinking and re-drawing. The aforementioned danger in improvisation lies within this risky business of openness, which allows for improvisation. However, as any disaster management team might concur, this allowance for digression allows for more humane and empathetic approaches to structure.

## 2. Dialogue

### Sophia:

In late 2013, I found out about the *Yolanda* tragedy in the news and felt a crippling sadness. I listened to death metal as a way to relate to the victims' pain, and to inundate my own.

*Rapture of the dying age, a shattered hourglass*

*Wrath of the warring gods and so this too shall pass.*

*It's only getting worse, not worth a moment's regret*

*Each dawn another curse, every breath a twisting blade*

*What will be left behind in the ashes of the wake?*

*(Machine & LOG, 2004)*

I created new meaning out of this song's words, relating them all to the tragedy. I felt the throbbing of my heart in the torrential drumming of the double bass. As I rode the FX<sup>i</sup> on my way to work, I wondered if the other passengers felt the same. Not long after this disaster, a downpour of relief aid from other countries came flowing into the Philippines. Other countries have also heard about the misfortune of people hit by the strongest typhoon we have had so far. And we are not strangers from typhoons. As if poverty was not strong enough of a whip, *Yolanda* decided to deal a more unimaginably painful strike on the Samar-Leyte region. All my menial worries flew out of the FX window. As the death toll increased, stories from the people left behind were also (re)counted. The media need not have exaggerated – children's arms had been 'ripped off'. A picture of a father cradling his dead child's body was permanently imprinted on my mind. And whenever I recall this disaster, the recurring image

of a father and his child makes me feel I was somehow part of this moment, however distant I was from those who experienced it.

**Bianca:**

I had just arrived in Barcelona to start my PhD two months before *Haiyan* happened. Coincidentally, my PhD project was about crisis management. During that time, I had the vaguest idea as to what aspect of crisis management I will be working on. The EU project I was engaged in looked at how IT-enabled and networked-enabled firms operate in crisis environments. I entered the program thinking mostly about small and medium enterprises back in the Philippines and how they work in disaster environments. I was also thinking about the use of social media, how critical organizations communicate, how different organizing processes come together to implement an organized response to disasters.

I was learning about disasters from a certain angle when *Haiyan* happened. And when it did, I was confronted by a deep longing of home, and instant knowledge. What can I do as a person who has just embarked on a career that seeks to understand disasters? There was a surge of information everywhere, there was a narrative of panic, of pity, of government inaction (as if the government was the only legitimate actor that could make things happen). What are the myths? What is sensationalised? What do I treat as noise?

I felt helpless, and lost, and mostly emotional while I watched the news. At that point in my career, I was advised not to 'fall native' to the phenomena. I am a researcher, regardless of my nationality. I must be objective, they said. I must not be biased, they said.

**Sophia:**

It's interesting how we are referring to the same typhoon yet call it by different names. *Haiyan* is a more international name, by which people outside the Philippines have called the typhoon (see, for example, Mazumdar, 2013). *Yolanda*, a more Hispanic-sounding name which more closely reflects the Philippines' colonial and cultural history, was used by local authorities in official announcements about the storm. The local name suggests a sense of territoriality and responsibility. Personally, I feel *Yolanda* evokes a familiarity connected to my identity. *Haiyan* sounds more professional and less intimate, suggesting that the typhoon

and its site of impact was a spectacle, a place to be watched from a distance or from the outside.

Thinking about this binary more reflexively, I am reminded about the complex relationship between naming and affect. Names posit problems related to mistranslations and the well-known lack of equivalences between symbol and referent (Ebert, 1986; Fischer, 2011).

A much more calamitous effect of missed translation should be noted. The victims of *Haiyan/Yolanda* experienced a tragic difficulty in interpreting the phrase “storm surge,” which came as part of a warning issued by the local weather authorities. The people directly affected by *Yolanda* could not fully appreciate the graveness of the warning, as the phrase did not elicit a response, not even of a ‘deviant’ nature. There was no known Visayan equivalent to “storm surge,” as the typhoon victims have not heard about it before. The linguistic problem crucial to the disaster that later occurred was much less a case of a Saussurean equivalence (arbol = tree) or a Derridean catachresis (storm surge = tsunami), than a Spivakian muteness (storm surge =?!). The representational conundrum was not a case of mistranslation or lack of fit, but between a representation and a missing interpretation. A plethora of suggested names for “storm surge” have since been given through mass media and social media in the aftermath of *Yolanda*, including *humbak* (Finding a Filipino word for storm surge: 'Daluyong' or 'humbak'? , 2013), *tsu-alon*, *tsu-balod* (Oposa, 2013), *silakbô* (Rodolfo, 2013), and *daluyong-bagyo*<sup>ii</sup>. Oposa (2013) offers a summary of the tragic consequences of this lack, and contends that the tragic non-translation is more political than merely linguistic:

In the first place, our people did not understand what a storm surge was because it is an English term that does not have a commonly understood local translation. This was compounded by the fact that our people have never experienced a storm surge of such magnitude.

Thus, the warnings of a 7-meter storm surge did not seem real to us. Had our weather bureau better explain what a storm surge was or called it a tsunami-like wave, the people of Tacloban would have run for their lives and rushed to higher ground.

Besides, how many times have we experienced the power of a typhoon Signal No. 4? Come to think of it, yes, we experience it every day. But it does not come in the form of wind and rain. Rather, it comes in the form of political egos with sustained winds of a typhoon Signal No. 10

We have thus far argued for the difference between knowledge that is different from "instant knowledge." Knowledge that affects emotions do not constitute a ready concoction such as when Zagefka, Noor and Brown (2013) "added" geographical and cultural knowledge to what participants knew about a certain place of disaster. A more complex conception of knowledge is missing here. It is not something researchers (or other knowers) can simply "fall native" to.

Many doctoral students like us are advised to somehow establish some distance between ourselves and the objects of our research. But is not this distance already inherent in the act of trying to know? Becoming native implies that a researcher has succumbed to a way of viewing the object of research which brings them to the same position as this object. In closing this gap, researchers move to a place of reflexivity, which wouldn't count as a venue wherein valid scientific research is conducted.

Perhaps "certain angle" is a contradiction. It appears that the dominant methods of crisis management research encourage viewing disasters from a perspective of "certainty", yet researchers attempt to systematically address the unknown, or what is yet to be known. This is indeed a disturbing paradox that you have noted elsewhere (Villar & Miralles, 2015). Furthermore, a positionality of certitude is in itself a 'view from nowhere' (Lather, 2007), in that it cannot reveal its own implicit assumptions.

A differently critical and ethical move in writing about learning would be to acknowledge distance as an aspect of *researcher effect* instead of maintaining it as a component of *researcher objectivity*. Looking at our first recollections, an obvious distance seems to be geographical. You were in Barcelona and I was in Manila when the typhoon *Haiyan/Yolanda* made a landfall on the Visayas region of the Philippines. We were at a safe distance from the destruction and have heard of the calamity through the media. Our emotional response was perhaps brought about by a closeness that we felt we had with the disaster victims (more on this later), but at this point it is important to try to look at how we view the disaster to

acknowledge that we occupy a place of privilege wherein our own *social* and not only geographical position can become more apparent. Our educational attainment and its concomitant place of privilege contributes to how far we are from our 'objects' of affection and compassion. The angle from which we view the *Haiyan/Yolanda* disaster is certainly different from the vantage point of its victims. Instead of de-contaminating us from nativised subjectivity, this renewed knowledge about researcher distance highlights the fraught enterprise of trying to know from a relational and contextualised perspective.

**Bianca:**

I must fully disclose that the feelings as I described it in the previous paragraphs are written in light of my recollections as a freshman PhD candidate. This stage, at least based on my experience, is characterised by an overwhelming surge of passion and impulse. I was passionate because this was my country they were talking about on the news, and I was impulsive because I was supposed to be [or was under the impression that I was] in a position of authority as far as knowledge is concerned, i.e. “that’s what I study, I should be useful”. In retrospect, I was just beginning to appreciate the different perspectives on making knowledge workable through research - which we later on learn as ontologies and epistemologies. Even as I became more exposed to the philosophy of science, I think, in retrospect, that everything took time. This was essential - to see the maturity of a thought, the process of being comfortable in what we aim to do with the kind of knowledge we are creating or discovering as a result of our own research endeavours. I find that research positionality is a decision that should be consciously made by the researcher, with due consideration of their epistemological and ontological comforts, i.e. that which they identify with.

As regards the following commentary:

Sophia: It appears that the dominant methods of crisis management research encourage viewing disasters from a perspective of “certainty,” yet researchers attempt to systematically address the unknown, or what is yet to be known

I will have to respectfully disagree. I think that the dominance of approaches is less hinged on whether we cling to a perspective of certainty vs uncertainty. Every discipline that tackles disasters and crises have very specific best practices. For example, the field of engineering tends to focus modelling risks and vulnerability and looking at effects on certain outcomes.

On the other hand, studying disasters from the perspective of sociology will also consider the processes that lead to certain outcomes. Sociologists whose works are seminal in disaster research argue that 'at the core of disaster management are twin foundations of preparedness and improvisation' (Drabek & MacEntire, 2003, p. 108). As a result, a level of flexibility must be critically reflected in the conduct of disasters research.

Meanwhile, I fully support the need to acknowledge distance as a researcher effect. The kind of stories we highlight, and the solutions we put forth are derived from our own positions. Likewise, I would argue that 'emotional response' will also figure in as a part of researcher effect. Depending on the discipline one is coming from, and depending on the researcher's epistemological orientation, emotional response can be more or less apparent in the manner of communicating knowledge regarding disasters.

**Sophia:**

Perhaps we are on the same page, looking from different angles. The Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Resource Based View (RBV) approaches as you have noted (Villar & Miralles, 2015) assume some certainty from knowledge about resources about how organizations would respond to disasters, without considering micro-level adjustments made by individuals. Responses to disasters are much more dynamic than simply trying to determine outcomes from a 'specific angle' (e.g. the availability of valuable resources): 'RBV proved limited in its applicability among organizations that operate in environments that are characterised by high degree of change and dynamism' (Villar and Miralles, 2015, p. 3). I concur that whether these methods are anchored on certainty or existing approaches are "dominant" should not be our cathectic focus, as this would be a return to an insistence on a "best practice" that would trump other validities. We turn to:

epistemological indeterminacy in order to underscore contemporary interest in situatedness, perspective, relationality, narrative, poesis and blurred genres. It then surveys across the field of social inquiry in terms of the variety of available discourses of validity in order to delineate the weakening of any 'one best way approach' to validity (Lather, 2007, p. 5161)

Improvisation is inevitably necessary before and during the 'unfolding' of the contingencies of disasters (Villar and Miralles, 2015), but how about post-disaster re-

construction through various levels of epistemological and ontological distances? In this way, our inclusive methodology (invoking reminiscences, emotional responses and consequently the unapologetically subjective) is a resistance towards a masquerading act of objectivity in what is considered more “scientific” forms of research. It is also a response to one-dimensional correlations between various factorial components neatly stripped of entanglements concomitant with the process of research conducted by human subjects. If we are to make a more humane enquiry into the tragic as experienced by disaster victims then it would be just to acknowledge how our processes of ‘knowing’ are interwoven with the trauma, loss and failure that reverberate within and outside ground zeros of disasters and calamities.

Architecting improvisations is necessary before and during the ‘unfolding’ of the contingencies of disasters (Villar & Miralles, 2015). Similar to the lack of fit between plans and action in disaster management organizations (aligned/deviated), an ontological violence is also at play between the actual and the perceived (real event/proposed representation) as we think about disasters in relation to our experience (or as we have learned through our recollections, our lack of it).

The ‘more or less’ of emotional responses as you have described is also contingent on onto-epistemological dis/positions. By locating our current dialogue within the personal in our knowledge production processes we have dipped our toes into a rather murky (instead of pure) research endeavour.

You are careful to delineate between different sorts of disaster, prioritising an ethically social meaning, if the life sustaining functions of a social system breaks down over the personal:

Bianca: If we take the meaning of disasters as I have described above, I would say that I have not experienced a disaster while doing my PhD. Certain disasters occurred, for sure, in the course of my PhD.

But it is difficult to identify where these delineations begin to dissipate, as individuals comprise the collective, and vice versa. This is relevant to the concept of ‘shared humanity’ that we have discussed earlier. This is poignant in one of your journal entries:

Bianca: The crash of MH17 brought this terrible news of 298 human lives lost... some of them - and this hits me the most - just wanted to get to a scientific conference. They were knowledge builders, movers of the scientific community... I am a researcher; I go to conferences myself. I live miles away from my family and loved ones, too, and I do travel to reunite with them on a regular basis. I could have been one of those people...

However, because we did not suffer the physical loss ourselves, and our bodies were not hit directly with its fatal impact, mere empathic anguish would never suffice. The event of danger is relegated to hazard instead of actual tragedy, and we do not allow ourselves the audacity of calling it our own. But is our refusal to own the tragic, conversely, also an inappropriate disavowal? No matter who happens to be on the physical site of danger, shouldn't we call it *our* disaster, considering what we universally share (i.e. "I could have been")? If we take our similarities seriously, feelings of deep anguish "from a distance" could not be negated by the difference between casualty or survival. However, "knowing" takes on a specific dimension through categorical specifications of belonging, allowing us to assert certain levels of intimacy with the victims.

**Bianca:**

After our conversation, and after this exchange, I have had the opportunity to reflect on what it means to really 'know' about disasters. It seems to me that all this time, disasters have merely been a context, a starting point for conversation to *know* something beyond the surface.

I cannot help but highlight the following aspects of our shared introspection:

1. This is a story of two people, different but the same, come together with the intention of knowing about something.
  - a. Similar - they come from the same country, speak the same language, they went to the same school as teenagers, were educated by the same teachers in secondary school, wrote for the same school newspaper publication, both women, both married, of the same generation, both left their mother countries, and academics in training.

- b. Different - they were trained differently in research, with different disciplines, one is a mother, another is only thinking about one day becoming a mother, one lives with her husband, the other in a long distance marriage and struggling with the constraints of dual career options for academics.
2. When they picked the theme, disaster, as a starting point for knowing about something, one had a formalised scholarly training for understanding disasters, and the other was in a state of more general knowledge. Inevitably, the one who was trained in disaster scholarship, tried to carefully delineate the definitions, the best practices, and empirical grounding of disasters. She presented her knowledge about disasters as a package with pre-existing structural scaffolding. When the other person came to ask, "have you experienced a disaster in your PhD or personal life?" there was an impulsive need for she who knows disaster as a science to present it as science.

I think this is the part that opened up a possibility to revisit the structural scaffolding of something that we assume to know better because of our formal training about the topic. My gut reaction to that question was to define disaster and remove myself from the story. However, when you showed me a raw mind map of how you think about disasters, you pointed out a possibility of disaster that is fundamentally personal - like being away from your son.

I had to take a step back and revisit the definition that I adhere to: 'disasters occur when life sustaining social systems are threatened to the point of breakdown.' There is both an aspect of vulnerability and an aspect of a breakdown of a life-sustaining social system. The hypothetical example that you gave embodied two fundamental aspects of what defines a disaster: you were considering a vulnerability to the loss of a loved one, and that could potentially cause a breakdown in your immediate social system as you are ultimately a part of a social system - in the university where you work, in your nuclear family, in other aspects. You make up one part of a whole, and if you are exposed to a vulnerability such as a loss, how it affects you will also affect your own social system. It was, technically a disaster, but on a different angle that I would have not previously acknowledged before. This reinforces what you pointed out as a level of intimacy with the victims - we tell their stories, and their stories

are made up of individual interpretations of disasters - what they lose, how they are traumatised. The individual stories progress to a collective.

3. That point of questioning and being able to articulate an interpretation of a certain topic, can in fact, bring both participants of the discourse to accumulate new knowledge, new interpretations of existing knowledge, and a critical reflection of knowledge. Our process also showed that despite varying levels of formal training in a certain discipline, one does not necessarily have to be merely at a receiving end just because she knows a little less about the said topic, or the other merely at the giving end just because she knows a little more about the said topic. Both can come out of a discussion with new and renewed knowledge on the basis of active questioning and reflections that are undertaken equally by both participants.

In our conversation, you emphasise 'shared humanity' as something that allows us to know about something amid differences. We \*know\*, no matter how different or levels of knowledge may be, because we are connected by that shared humanity. As a result of that shared humanity, we created a shared space where '(we) can allow ourselves to say what we know.'

I could not agree more. Metaphorically, discourses such as what we currently have on knowing about disasters, take the form of constellations. Each person is an embodiment of knowledge which was formed through various planned and accidental occurrences, much like stars are formed as a result of turbulences deep within clouds:

'[these turbulences] give rise to knots with sufficient mass that gas and dust can begin to collapse under its own gravitational attraction. As the cloud collapses, the material at the centre begins to heat up [...], it is this hot core at the heart of a collapsing cloud that will one day become a star.' ("Stars," 2018)

As individuals, we come out as autonomous persons that embody core knowledges. We know what we know, and we make sense of what we know because of our different formation processes. We come out differently, yet at our core, we have a shared attribute of humanity, which ultimately becomes a mechanism for us to create knowledge together. This process of \*knowing\* together allows us to build new meaning, renew meanings, which ultimately can form an understandable, recognizable pattern just like a constellation of stars.

**Sophia:**

I looked up which stories I might have read during the time when *Yolanda* struck. Through an online search, I found the news article entitled *Typhoon Haiyan: In hard-hit Tacloban, children ripped from arms* (Stevens & Hancocks, 2013). I think this article could have been one of the sources that I read around the time of the disaster. I then also found the need to ask myself if, as I had previously believed, there was no need for the media to exaggerate their news coverage of the disaster because of the already presumed gravity of its impact. I realised that I could have made incorrect interpretations from the news. Embarrassingly, I assumed children's arms had been ripped off from their bodies when what was really implied was that children have been taken away by the raging waters from their *parents'* arms. The headline reads, '...children ripped from arms' while a subheading within this article states 'Children torn from arms'. My misinterpretation could have been a mistranslation, considering English is my second language. Or perhaps the authors' use of *torn* and *ripped* deployed a desired effect on the reader who would have already been baffled and shocked because of the impact of the tragedy. The elision of the word *parents* (to whom the arms actually belong) creates the possibility of creating an image of children's maimed bodies on the reader's mind. Furthermore, the headline itself is also maimed, leaving out details for either economy of words or economic gains – or perhaps both. As I might have read this headline years ago during an emotionally and socially turbulent time, my mental and emotional state during that time could also have contributed to its effects of its play on language.

News headlines, as part of a larger discourse of corporate media competition, are complicit with games set in a stage of a global neoliberal agenda. In the arena of 'global education,' the notion of 'games' as metaphor is useful in describing processes of ranking in 'Olympic' competitions between institutions characteristic of athletic sports events (Stronach, 2010). News institutions are also subject to similar contests. This particular news article invests the reader's emotion in order to get ahead in the global game. Its writers had to appeal to a global audience; it had to deploy devices that would appeal to a more or less universal sentiment – that of the human empathy towards tragedy.

Perhaps such appeals to emotion motivate the separation of knowledge from affect in some academic circles, such as what Bianca had earlier experienced. However such sanitary separation, aside from being unfeasible, perpetuates a conflation between feelings and

weakness (May, 1993 cited in Shacklock, 1998). A view of subject involvement as an infestation of knowledge prevents discussions and debates about researcher or writer influence. Rather, a more ethical view regarding universal truths should concern knowledge production wherein both the news reporter and the academic researcher participate as performative players engaged in a 'global game' (Edwards & Usher, 2008, p. 95). One of the ways educational researchers have tried to bring their playing "tactics" in view is to produce research as narratives, in which they reflexively engage with intersections between their own subjectivity and the process of research as embodied, contextual "knowing."

Within this constellation of knowledge, we found that our shared social and class background prevented us from the type of knowing that disaster victims engaged with, and that we were trying to know about disasters "from a distance." This socio-economic distance interacts with other distances – between various notions of the same concepts, and also between past and present selves. Through this initial exploration we have come to view them as meaningful differences that are entangled with not only accessing, but also of producing what (we think) we know.

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<sup>i</sup> This is a form of public transport in the Philippines, usually SUVs.

<sup>ii</sup> We turn to sources which have received lesser merits of credibility, as the original source cited by Wikipedia (<https://www.gov.ph/crisis-response/mga-paalala-ukol-sa-storm-surge/>) is now inexistent, echoing the still unofficial and unnamed status of "storm surge" in Visayan/Philippine cultural knowledge.