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Conflict mediation and traditional authority in the province of Lanao del Sur, Mindanao

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper elaborates on the concept of hybridity as deployed by The Asia Foundation (TAF)in their conflict management interventions in the province of Lanao del Sur, the Philippines. This analysis starts from a critical reading of one specific Theory of Change (ToC) that has been formulated by The Asia Foundation under the UK Department for International Development Programme Partnership Arrangements (DfID PPA) Component 5 and is entitled: 'Community-level efforts to improve local security in Mindanao'. Two broad research questions have been derived from this ToC. First, an empirical analysis of the 'weak state and strong traditional authority' hypothesis that underpins the formulation of this ToC and conflict management strategy. Second, the question of whether the institutions through which TAF is working can be understood as hybrid institutions, in the sense that they reflect an interaction of the formal and the informal. The paper is then concluded by relating these major empirical findings to the broader Hybrid Political Order (HPO) literature. The main arguments from this paper can be divided into two major parts. A first, empirical part and a second part which deals more explicitly with the ToC and the place of hybridity therein.

MAJOR EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

- Our fieldwork data do not support the framing of Lanao del Sur as a province marked by weak state institutions and strong traditional institutions. Rather, traditional authority solely obtains relevance when this is combined with the coercive and financial resources associated with formal statehood. This observation also indicates how a traditional/informal institutional field cannot be separated from a formal institutional field but that these two entities overlap.

- When trying to understand the intricacies and complexities of conflict management in Lanao del Sur, the main distinction that was being made by people was the one between formal punitive justice and amicable settlement. The importance here is that this practice of amicable settlement or mediation is not confined to an informal or traditional institutional sphere but is also performed within formal state institutions. It is therefore crucial to make a conceptual distinction between practices of conflict management and the specific institutional fora wherein these are being deployed. Following these observations, hybridity in this specific context should be understood as an interaction wherein formal governance institutions serve as venues in which informal practices of conflict mediation are being deployed.

- The local executive maintains a firm grip on these initiatives of amicable settlement because of his/her access to coercive and financial resources associated with formal statehood and his/her direct control over the formal institutions wherein this amicable settlement is being practiced. Traditional authorities without a connection to the local executive only play a secondary role at best.

POLICY-ORIENTED FINDINGS

Although never explicitly stated as such, it is clear that some of the general rationales behind this ToC share similarities with some basic features of the academic HPO literature. This is above all the case for the space that is provided to local usages, institutions and actors in settling conflict and initiating peace and the critical stance towards those types of interventions that uniquely focus on the creation, or engineering, of formal state institutions in bringing peace and stability. Despite these broad similarities, there are also some points of critique/improvement that can be mentioned.

- There is no clearly defined added value to the usage of the concept of hybridity as an interaction between formal and informal institutional fields. Rather, the focus lies much more in the importance of including locally embedded indigenous practices of dispute settlement in a strategy of conflict management. The main advantage of this is: 1) a sense of ownership among the target population and, 2) a great deal of flexibility in mediating a local feud. These two issues were persistently mentioned as a substantial added value in the way in which TAF is intervening in the region. The issue of hybridity can be considered as secondary when compared to these two points.

- The approach used by TAF is more of an actor-oriented approach rather than a truly institutional approach. The prime focus lies in building up a coalition (consisting of people from the formal and the informal institutional sphere) that can put pressure on warring parties to refrain from further using violence. The manner through which this happens is then based on a range of informal strategies of amicable settlement. In this sense, the rationale underlying these conflict management interventions comes remarkably close to what is being called a 'coalitional ToC' in other programmes.

- It has been suggested that a potential avenue to rethink the added value of working through hybrid institutions is reconceptualising the balance between pragmatic conflict management interventions focusing on the quick settlement of violent disputes on the one hand, and governance programs aimed at the long-term reinforcement of impersonal institutions on the other hand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFP   Armed Forces of the Philippines

ARMM   Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao

CAFGU   Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit

CHDF   Civilian Home Defense Force

CMU   Conflict management Unit

CVO   Civilian Voluntary Organisation

DFID PPA   Department for International Development Programme Partnership Arrangements

FGD   Focus group discussion

HPO   Hybrid Political Order

IRA   Internal Revenue Allotment

JSRP   Justice and Security Research Program

MILF   Moro Islamic Liberation Front

OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PDAF   Priority Development Assistance Funds

PNP   Philippine National Police

TAF   The Asia Foundation

ToC   Theory of Change

UNDP   United Nations Development Program

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION: THE TAF THEORY OF CHANGE ON HYBRID CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The theory of change that will be systematically analysed in this paper is formulated under the DFID PPA Component 5 and is entitled: 'Community-level efforts to improve local security in Mindanao'.[1] This ToC states that:

> *"By supporting hybrid or mixed systems that combine formal and informal approaches to managing conflicts, we allow the different systems to draw strength from one another, strengthen the conflict resolution process, reduce violence, and eventually draw the informal working systems into the ambit of mainstream formal governance structures."*[2]

This ToC was formulated for the first time in 2011 and was introduced to partner organisations throughout 2012. The core ideas for this specific ToC are founded on a USAID sponsored research project on the root causes of violent conflict in Muslim Mindanao. The main argument of this study is that the majority of violent incidents in Mindanao are caused by different sorts of local disputes, or so-called *rido* (feuds).[3] Secondly, it was argued that these feuds mainly played out between kinship groups, more specific clans/families. As such, the research by TAF questioned the commonly accepted framing of conflict in Mindanao as one being uniquely between Muslim armed groups versus the Philippine state. Based on these observations, a conflict management strategy has been developed by TAF that targets the quick settlement of local-level conflicts which play out between these kinship groups in Central and Western Mindanao. These programs have been implemented, simultaneously with the active involvement of TAF in the ongoing national-level peace talks between the MILF and the Philippine government. As such, a sort of dual strategy has been developed wherein programs of conflict management at the micro-level of society have been combined with national-level peace talks.[4] Since 2014 however, these local-level conflict management strategies have been put on a hold,[5] in order to focus time and resources on the successful conclusion of the talks between the MILF and the government, and the installment of a new Bangsamoro, as a replacement for the current ARMM (Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao).

While different arguments have been made about this specific ToC in previous TAF/JSRP papers, our aim with this third paper is to delve deeper into the concept of hybridity which is pivotal in the ToC formulated by TAF but which also has a central place in the research agenda of the JSRP. This will be done through a careful empirical analysis about the way TAF has been working with a specific set of conflict management institutions in the province of Lanao del Sur over the past years. In a later stage, this analysis will be then be broadened to wider and ongoing academic and policy discussions about

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[1] For an analysis of the effectiveness of this ToC in the context of North Cotabato, see: Adam, Jeroen; Verbrugge, Boris and Vanden Boer, Dorien (2014a), *Hybrid Systems of Conflict Management and Community-Level Efforts to Improve Local Security in Mindanao*, London: TAF/JSRP Paper 13 (Justice and Security Research Programme/ London School of Economics)

[2] TAF Philippines (2012) *PPA Year 1 Annual Component Report. Component 5 : Community-level Efforts to Improve Local Security in Mindanao*. Unpublished document

[3] The findings of this USAID research project are published in: Torres, Wilfredo Magno (2007a). *Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao*. Makati City: The Asia Foundation.

[4] For an analysis on the potential interaction between these two scales of programming, see: Adam, Jeroen; Verbrugge, Boris and Vanden Boer, Dorien (2014b) *Peace Making and State-Society Interactions in Conflict-torn Mindanao*, London: TAF/JSRP Paper 18 (Justice and Security Research Programme/London School of Economics)

[5] The exception is if the particular conflict threatens progress in the peace talks, as assessed by stakeholders in the region.

the place of hybrid institutions in peace building and conflict management. However, before we can touch upon these debates, it is necessary to analyse how hybridity is being conceptualised by TAF in their conflict management strategy. Based on a critical reading of TAF policy documents and interviews with TAF staff - in particular people from the Conflict Management Unit - two different levels can be distinguished wherein this concept of hybridity is being deployed.

1. The institutions that are being applied by TAF in their strategy of conflict management are understood as hybrid institutions/systems. Within the actual ToC, these systems are being defined as: 'hybrid or mixed systems that combine formal and informal approaches at managing conflicts.'[6] Somewhat further in the PPA document, it is explained that these mixed or hybrid systems 'combine the formal government framework with the informal indigenous/traditional approaches to managing conflict'. Although hybridity is clearly defined within this PPA as an interaction between formal and informal institutions, in daily parlance among TAF staff, this was much less the case. Here, the concept of hybridity is most often used to designate everything 'informal' which falls outside the strict, formal governance sphere. This can range from traditional authorities to rebel groups, civil society organisations, religious leaders etc.[7]

2. It is important to note that this hybridity argument contains both a descriptive and a prescriptive component. First of all, there is the mere observation that the broader socio-political environment in which TAF is intervening in Central and Western Mindanao is characterised by weak formal institutions, gravely attenuated by decades of armed conflict. Within this 'weak state environment', wherein the state does not manage to uphold its monopoly on the use of violence, one witnesses a strong resilience of all types of indigenous institutions which over time have dynamically merged with formal government institutions. Based on this observation, one is simply obliged to work with these hybrid institutions in order to strengthen the conflict resolution process.[8] This appreciation of the formal state as being utterly weak, or even non-existent, in these parts of Mindanao is also shared by other international organisations operating in the region.[9] However, apart from this descriptive argument, there also is a clear prescriptive component within this ToC wherein these hybrid institutions are understood as having an exceptional capacity to reach a sustainable settlement to violent disputes in the region. In other words, rather than being considered as a hindrance for effective conflict management, working with and through hybrid institutions is considered as an added value. For instance, it was argued that these informal and/or hybrid institutions enjoy a much higher legitimacy and social embeddedness as they are accessible to the majority of the population when compared to formal state institutions.[10] In addition, their flexible character which leaves room for amicable settlement and all types of informal negotiations is seen as central to the sort of quick settlements TAF is aiming for. Their highly flexible character also makes them somehow 'malleable' for external organisations such as TAF. For instance, it was mentioned that a particular organisation, for example a business club or an association of Ulama (Muslim religious leaders), which intrinsically has little to do with dispute settlement, can be strategically 'pushed' to intervene in certain disputes. In short, the added value ascribed to these hybrid institutions is found in their accessibility/legitimacy

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[6] TAF Philippines (2012), op.cit., p. 5
[7] Mid-term workshop with members CMU, TAF Office Manila, 02.03.2013
[8] TAF Philippines (2012), op.cit, p. 24
[9] Informal meeting TAF/Ausaid, TAF office Manila, TAF Office Manila, 11.09.2013
[10] Interview members TAF Cotabato office, TAF Office Cotabato, 20.03.2013

and their flexibility/malleability; which makes them preferential instruments to conduct certain conflict management interventions.

3. This strategy of conflict management was considered as a 'hybrid strategy of conflict management' by different people in the TAF conflict management unit. The main rationale for considering this as a hybrid approach is the fact that a broad range of actors are being drawn into a coalition to put pressure on warring parties to refrain from using further violence. As this range of actors consists of a combination of informal public authorities such as traditional and religious leaders or rebel leaders on the one hand, and formal authorities such as AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) or PNP (Philippine National Police) personnel, politicians, bureaucrats on the other hand, these coalitions are understood as being hybrid.[11] As explained by Willy Torres, head of the Conflict Management Unit until mid-2013: 'a collective effort is also a hybrid system in a sense'.[12] In this regard, while the aforementioned interpretation of hybridity is understood through specific institutions, this second interpretation mainly plays at the level of certain actors/individuals.

In short, the two large rationales that underlie the formulation of this particular ToC on conflict mediation are the crucial observations that, 1) the majority of the violence conducted in Mindanao has a local character and concerns local kinship groups (more specifically: clans), hence the need for a local response to these conflicts, 2) formal state institutions do not have sufficient capacity to cope with these local conflicts, hence the need/inevitability to work through hybrid/informal institutions. However, as became clear through different interviews and focus group discussions, these hybrid/informal institutions were also considered as having some exceptional opportunities for effective conflict management, due to their flexible character and strong social legitimacy. In addition, one extra understanding of this concept of hybridity could be discerned, wherein the actual strategy of conflict management itself can be labelled as hybrid if the organisation taps into a diverse pool of people coming from both formal and informal sectors of society.[13] This is linked with a specific type of conflict management strategy in which (elite) coalitions and networks are established to put pressure on warring parties to refrain from using further violence and eventually reach a settlement for their dispute.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The empirical and conceptual underpinning for this ToC is somewhat unbalanced. For the discussion about the nature of violent conflict in the region, an exceptionally elaborate qualitative and quantitative dataset is being used in the form of the published *rido* research project and the *rido* data set. However, the evidence base for a range of other claims that are being made within this ToC is much more limited. We are referring here in particular to what can be broadly defined as the specific institutional context in which TAF is intervening. It indeed makes sense to speak about a 'weak state environment' wherein the state is not the unique regulating institution, based on the observation that Central and Western Mindanao are characterised by decades of warfare and the presence of a range of armed groups. However, this observation also leaves many crucial questions unanswered. For instance, there is no systematic baseline study about the actual scale of penetration of state institutions

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[11] Interview Rommel de la Rosa, TAF office Cotabato, 16.04.2013; Closing workshop with member CMU, TAF Office Manila, 29.04.2013.
[12] Mid-term workshop with members CMU, TAF Office Manila, 02.03.2013.
[13] In addition, it should be mentioned, that in particular among people working for different partner organisations in rural, peripheral areas, the concept of hybridity was hardly known or lacked a clear definition and common understanding.

in these regions or a potential spatial variation within this penetration (town versus countryside, island provinces versus mainland Mindanao, presence of AFP camps etc.).[14] Moreover, as already argued elsewhere, the characterisation of this region as a 'weak state environment' might underestimate the manner in which armed commanders of different rebel groups have been actively involved within formal state institutions. This can either be done by directly participating in elections, working as a government employee, or becoming usurped by many of the state-sanctioned paramilitary organisations such as a CVO (Civilian Voluntary Organisation) or a CAFGU (Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit). We do not necessarily wish to counter the argument that the formal state is weak in Western Mindanao. However we think that there is a need for a more fine-grained and nuanced conceptual toolbox which can provide sharper insights about the specific modalities of state penetration in the region. This is closely related to the fact that a range of conceptual ambiguities remain concerning the institutional environment in which TAF is intervening. For instance, a great deal of obscurity remains concerning the distinction between informal versus hybrid institutions and how this interaction between the informal and formal should be understood. Are formal state institutions merely captured by kin-based social structures such as clans, or is there a true interaction between traditional practices/rituals and formal procedures within these institutions? Are these interactions more of an *ad hoc* nature or do we really see the emergence of a truly alternative and sustainable institutional sphere?

While not all of these questions will be systematically answered throughout this paper, our objective is to bring some conceptual and empirical clarity within the discussions on hybrid institutions, based on a case study on conflict management institutions in the province of Lanao del Sur. More specifically, two large rationales will be systematically elaborated upon: 1) the first objective with this paper is to test the 'weak state authority' hypothesis that clearly underpins the formulation of this specific conflict management strategy by TAF, but which is also being put forward by other international organisations working in the region. For instance, a UNDP report on peace and development in Mindanao openly speaks about the '*deficient implementation capacity*' of local state institutions in the region in relation to conflict management and peace building.[15] Are formal conflict management institutions non-existent, dysfunctional, and inaccessible - or merely subject to partisan interests, thereby losing their supposedly impersonal nature? How are the decisions by formal conflict management institutions enforced and what role do informal organisations such as non-state armed groups or religious scholars play in this? 2) A second large question that will be elaborated upon is whether the institutions through which TAF is working can effectively be approached as hybrid institutions, in the sense that they truly reflect an interaction of the formal and the informal. If that is the case, how do these interactions materialise, does this give rise to a new institutional sphere, and where exactly does the added value of these hybrid institutions lie within an objective to reach (more) sustainable peace in the region? After these two sections, a final section of the paper attempts to broaden the discussion by relating findings to some of the major arguments and debates within the broader Hybrid Political Order literature.

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[14] Interestingly, a growing number of empirical case-studies claim that even in regions confronted with long-term high-intensity violence and very low development indicators, state institutions might retain much more relevance than generally accounted for, and the so-called 'image' of the state remains a very powerful reference point, even for rebel groups. For an example, see: Hoffman, Kasper and Vlassenroot, Koen (2014) 'Armed groups and the exercise of public authority: the cases of the Mayi-Mayi and Raya Mutomboki in Kalehe, South Kivu', *Peacebuilding*, 2 (2), pp. 202-220.

[15] Oquist, Paul (2000) *Options for a Win-Win Solution in Mindanao. Multi-Donor Group Support for Peace and Development in Mindanao: Third Assessment Mission Report*, Manila: United Nations Development Program, pp. 5-6.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this research project were collected during a nine week research stay in the province of Lanao del Sur in the months of September and October, 2013. Throughout this research stay, an analysis has been made about conflict management institutions and the role played by TAF within these institutions, based on the aforementioned two research questions. The data were collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews and open focus group discussions. Within the selection of respondents and cases,[16] particular attention was paid to the role of customary/traditional authorities and religious leaders in the settlement of certain disputes and the way in which these are (or are not) engaged in formal institutions. However, as will be clear from the explanation below, it is of little analytical value dividing our respondents into fixed social categories such as 'traditional leaders', 'civil society members', or 'politicians', since the same person often combines different types of authority and displays a variety of identities. Secondly, considering the enormous variety within the category of traditional leaders - or at least people claiming a traditional leadership position based on a certain historical and genealogical narrative - the category of 'traditional leader' in the context of Lanao del Sur is subject to huge inflation and may not reveal that much about the actual social position a person has in a certain community. Finally, twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with people directly or indirectly involved in conflict management initiatives in the region. These individual interviews were complemented with ten open Focus Group Discussions wherein we attempted to gauge dominant perceptions about the legitimacy, effectiveness, and accessibility of different conflict management institutions. In total, this amounts to around fifty-one hours of interview material of which roughly 80% has been recorded.[17] The interviews and FGDs which constitute the empirical backbone of this research paper were complemented with an additional three3 week visit to the city of Cotabato in January 2014. This visit focused on different gatekeepers within peacebuilding and conflict management activities at the regional, Mindanao level and the national, Philippine level. These interviews allowed for a better understanding of how different scales of interventions interact with each other and provided a better understanding of certain socio-political dynamics at the regional and national scale. In total, fifteen interviews were conducted, amounting to about sixteen hours of recorded interviews. Most of these interviews were conducted individually or with a small group of people.

These primary data were complemented with a review of secondary literature which can be divided into three broad categories: 1) a review of existing literature on the conflict in Mindanao, with a specific focus on Lanao del Sur; 2) a review of existing literature on the state and state formation in the Philippines; 3) a review of the literature on hybridity in relation to conflict management and peace building. This literature will be introduced and discussed in the third section of this paper.

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[16] For reasons of security, a decision was made not to undertake an in-depth case study in one specific municipality; as this would have required a more permanent presence of the researchers. Instead, we worked in a more general manner through short-term visits in a number of municipalities, which were situated in the vicinity Marawi, the provincial capital of Lanao del Sur. In this manner, our research did not manage to collect complex micro-data on daily social interactions and power relations. On the other hand, the inclusion of a broader sample of research sites and a careful cross-checking of our data, allows us to draw some conclusions that have a wider geographic reach.

[17] Recordings were not made in circumstances that we judged to be too sensitive, or where the respondent(s) did not give their permission for recordings. In those instances, written notes were taken.

PART 1: WEAK STATE AND STRONG TRADITIONS IN LANAO DEL SUR? SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

1.1 THE WEAK STATE HYPOTHESIS WITHIN TAF AND PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

The province of Lanao del Sur seems to be the ultimate textbook example of the weak state hypothesis. In a chapter written for the TAF book on Rido, Matuan states: *'While the Philippine Constitution functions as the fundamental law of the land, in the pat a phangampong (indigenous polity), the so-called taritib ago igma serves as the fundamental law of the community'.*[18] In other words, indigenous institutions are considered to have a much stronger relevance and legitimacy among communities in Lanao del Sur when compared to formal governance structures. This view of weak state presence is closely linked with the observation that *rido* is rife within this province. Out of all the provinces covered in the *rido* study by TAF, Lanao del Sur has by far the highest prevalence of *rido* with 377 cases counted between the 1930s and 2005.[19] This is considerably higher when compared to the second highest province, Maguindanao with 218 cases counted. Following the rationale of this study which states that: *'Revenge killings and feuds are typical in small-scale societies where - ... - there is a lack of effective state control and authority'[20]*, it logically follows that the province of Lanao del Sur must be among those provinces in the Philippines with the weakest state penetration.

Following this line of thought, it is argued that due to the weakness of formal regulatory frameworks in Lanao del Sur, indigenous practices of conflict management are considered to be the most adequate - maybe even the only possible - venues to deal with violent tensions.[21] This view was strongly supported by Rido Inc., a local NGO which has acted as a partner organisation for TAF in the province since 2007. Rido Inc. sees Maranao[22] traditional institutions as the prime avenues for conflict mediation in the region, particularly in the case of clan conflicts since formal security and justice provisions lack social legitimacy within the communities. The argument is that the Maranao people consider these formal institutions as alien and imposed by a (post)-colonial state on a much older cultural tradition and social order which still enjoys a high legitimacy among the Maranao.[23] As a consequence, it is suggested that the mechanisms and actors which have the capacity to deal with these feuds should be searched for within the informal and traditional 'sector' of society. Within this traditional and informal sector, a diversity of strategies are pursued by Rido Inc. One such strategy consists of the writing up of so-called clan genealogies wherein common ancestry is demonstrated between rival clans. It is hoped that this proof of common ancestry will serve as a common ground through which the feuding clans will then reconcile. This strategy of clan genealogy is complemented by informal reconciliation meetings between traditional authorities/elders that are generally concluded

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[18] Matuan, Moctar I. (2007) Inventory of Existing Rido in Lanao del Sur (1994 –2004) in Wilfredo Magno Torres III (ed.), *Rido. Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao*. Manila: The Asia Foundation, pp. 71-97.

[19] Torres, Wilfredo Magno (2007b), Introduction in Wilfredo Magno Torres III (ed.), *Rido. Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao*. Manila: The Asia Foundation Torres, p. 16.

[20] Torres, Wilfredo Magno (2007b), op.cit, p. 17.

[21] Matuan, Moctar I. (2007), op.cit, p. 72.

[22] The term 'Maranao' does not solely capture the people living in the provincial capital Marawi but refers to an ethnic group, which originates from a region around lake Lanao and which is mainly situated in the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte.

[23] FGD Rido Inc., Illigan, 20.02.2013.

by reaching a consensus on the amount of blood money that needs to be paid to compensate for the harm inflicted. These interventions fit within a broader strategy of so-called 'clan organising' wherein, through a consultative process facilitated by Rido Inc., attempts are made to reach a stronger and more fixed system of traditional governance. For obvious reasons, reconstructing a clan genealogy on which a consensus exists is key for the successful completion of this exercise.

This long-term attempt at clan organising relates to conflict management and peace building, albeit in a more general and preventive manner: 1) by imposing a stricter system of traditional governance wherein rules and regulations are clear and considered as legitimate, it is hoped that the numerous violent conflicts erupting due to ambiguities in the succession of traditional positions, clan affiliations, traditional landownership etc. will be reduced, 2) by imposing a transparent system of traditional leadership, it is expected that these traditional leaders will enjoy enough legitimacy, power, and popularity to act as capable conflict mediators. However, it was admitted that not all of these traditional leaders have the capacity to perform mediation. Therefore, Rido Inc. attempted to build up a privileged working relationship with a selection of leaders they considered as credible *'problem solvers'*[24] 3) it is a widely held belief, not only among the members of Rido Inc. but also among many other people we interviewed, that the weakening of traditional Maranao culture is responsible for the prevalence of *rido*. Therefore, this reinstatement of tradition which is supposed to act as a moral compass, should result in a decline of violent feuds, or at least enable a more effective and quick settlement. This moral compass largely fits with the aforementioned *'taritib ago igma'* in the book chapter by Matuan, that can best be understood as a highly flexible set of Maranao norms, values, and principles. According to an expert on Maranao traditional law, this *'taritib ago igma'* supposedly *'provides a venue for dialogue among the community members.'*[25] Importantly, these efforts should not be understood as an exercise whereby Rido Inc. searches for a literal and historically correct reinstatement of cultural practices. Rather, tradition is here understood as an inspiration wherein attempts are being made to reinvent, or at least to give new meanings to, certain traditional practices.[26] For instance, so-called 'modern' criteria are being drafted for eligibility as a traditional leader. One of these criteria is the prohibition for traditional leaders to participate in politics.[27] However, as will be demonstrated below - at least for this specific criterion - the capacity of Rido Inc. to effectively enforce this seems limited.

1.2 THE WANING OF TRADITION AND TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

This framing of Lanao del Sur as a weak state environment on the one hand, and as having strong traditional institutions/leaders on the other, was not supported by our fieldwork findings. However, before delving deeper into these data, it is worth referring back to the aforementioned *rido* study by TAF. Within this study, some remarkable quantitative data are put forward that are not fully elaborated on within the book but which seem at odds with the weak state argument. For instance, in the chapter on Lanao del Sur, it is indicated that the largest group of people mediating in cases of *rido* between 1994 and 2004 consisted of politicians.[28] In total, about 89 politicians attempted to mediate

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[24] Interview with Pogie Atar, chairman Rido Inc., Marawi city, 13.09.2013.
[25] Interview with Kadhafi, traditional law expert, Marawi city, 17.09.2013.
[26] In this regard, the interventions by Rido Inc. should also be situated within a broader struggle about the meaning and place of tradition in contemporary Maranao society. For instance, many of these conceptions clash heavily with ideas of some Muslim religious scholars and more conservative Muslim organisations which give much more weight to religion and a 'correct' interpretation of the Koran.
[27] Interview with Pogie Atar, chairman Rido Inc., Marawi city, 13.09.2013.
[28] Matuan Moctar I. (2007), op.cit, p. 88.

in *rido* conflicts, followed by 68 traditional leaders and 13 religious leaders. Although these data need be to approached with some caution, considering the great overlap between the category of traditional leader and politician, this at least gives an indication that people occupying a political mandate are important actors in the intervention of violent disputes. Secondly, the fact that 'politics' is being considered as the most important cause of *rido* in Lanao del Sur gives an indication that access to the state is at least worth competing and fighting for.[29] If formal authority structures indeed would be as weak as generally represented, it is hard to imagine that this would be the number one cause of clan feuds in the province.

What these quantitative data thus seem to suggest is that state/politicians/elections might matter more than accounted for and that the supposed omnipotence of traditional institutions/leaders might be overrated. By and large, this corresponds with our own qualitative findings. Overall, a surprising consensus existed that traditional leaders were not the ultimate centres of authority and decision-making in the community and that over the past decades, their influence has steadily been waning. Interestingly, this was above all admitted by several Sultans and other traditional leaders themselves. As mentioned by the Sultan of the (once-famous) Sultanate of Baloi: *'Before the Spaniards came, we were the rulers'* and this Sultan saw in the imposition of 'democracy' and formal 'state-like' governance (both colonial and post-colonial) a sharp decline in the power of the real, true Sultans, descending from a noble blood line. Instead, this system has put another type of actor at the forefront of the political arena; people with resources. As he stated: *'From my own point of view, democracy is designed for the rich people'.*[30] This observation was based on an account that ascribed key importance to reciprocal clientelistic relations in the current local political arena; a point we will touch upon later. Due to the imposition of this modern democracy, this Sultan only perceived his title as a *'decoration'* and as a result, considers that he does not have the capacity to settle disputes between and within clans.[31] Similar statements were made throughout different interviews with other Sultans - admitting their dwindling authority and explaining this by the intrusion of a modern state.[32] For instance, the sultan of Taporog literally stated: *'Today, the Sultanates are disenfranchised under the constitution. They reduce us to non-entities. It is only by name. But before; the word of the Sultan is final. No one can contradict the decision of the Sultan...'*[33] Apart from these interviews with individual traditional leaders, these observations were also confirmed through different FGD's and individual interviews in which a consensus existed that power had shifted from the traditional field towards formal statehood.[34]

These data already provide some important nuances to the 'weak state/strong tradition' paradigm in a sense that traditional leaders see themselves as occupying only a subordinate position in society when compared to a 'glorious' past where they considered themselves as the ultimate centres of authority. While a systematic explanation for this observation would undoubtedly need a more elaborate historical analysis, at least two indicative observations can be put forward. First, Sultans – at least in the municipalities around Lake Lanao - no longer allocate land to followers. In different places all

[29] Matuan, Moctar I. (2007), op.cit., p.79.

[30] Interview with sultan Abubakar M. Ali, sultan of Baloi, municipality of Baloi, 16.09.2013.

[31] For a similar statement, see: interview Attorney Abdul Alonto, Iligan, 22.09.2013: *'The traditional leaders now are flower pots. Whenever there is a wedding, they are there in their nice garments, but nobody listens to them.'*

[32] FGD Mariatao Tara, 16.09.2013.

[33] Interview with sultan Farouk Sharif, sultan of Taporog and member of the Lanao Advisory Council, Marawi city, 24.09.2013. As a consequence, many of these traditional leaders also voiced the explicit wish that they would gain a formal recognition in the build-up of the new Bangsamoro.

[34] FGD, municipality of Binidayan, 18/09/2013; Interview with Prof. Sarangani, ex vice president MSU, Marawi City, 2.10.2013; Interview with Prof. Public administration and anthropology, MSU, Marawi city, 18.09.2013

over the world, this capacity to allocate land still constitutes the basis for traditional/customary authority as it enables these leaders to obtain control over people and their livelihoods in rural economies. While it was admitted that around lake Lanao, Sultans historically had had control over land, over the centuries this control had been waning as land was given away to many families and these plots were never returned to the Sultan. Instead, these have become further subdivided to children/grandchildren over different generations. Apart from the fact that this has given emergence to a complex web of oral and insecure land claims and disputes over inheritance rights and land boundaries, this has considerably circumscribed the power of the Sultan. As explained by the Sultan of Taporog, in the early days: *'No one could contradict the decision of the Sultan because all the ancestral domain was controlled by the Sultan. If the farmer is not a good one at developing the land, the sultan will award it to a good one...'* [35] Yet, as he further explained, this authority has evaporated, resulting in a serious decline of the Sultan's power in the community. A second explanatory factor that was systematically mentioned to account for the dwindling leverage of traditional leaders, is their lack of access to substantial financial resources. To put it more bluntly, as one respondent in an FGD stated: *'Traditional leaders are just like us, poor and uneducated.'* [36] As we will discuss more extensively below, this constitutes a particular problem since patronage funds are vital assets in the build-up of power and authority in the region.

Yet, despite this assessment that the power of traditional institutions/traditional leaders might not be so prominent, it would also be an inadequate assessment of the complexities of the socio-political landscape in Lanao to simply reverse this into a weak tradition versus strong politicians/state argument. As already mentioned in our methodological introduction, one should be careful not to think in fixed social categories as many of these overlap. As we will illustrate, it is in particular throughout this overlap that a considerable differentiation can be detected within the category of traditional leaders; wherein a part of this group has managed to position themselves as the ultimate centers of authority in the community.

1.3 THE OMNIPRESENCE OF ELECTORAL POLITICS

Based on our data, it is clear that the capacity to win elections is among the most critical factors in explaining whether traditional leaders still manage to retain their authority. In order to empirically illustrate this point, it is interesting to refer back to the story of the Sultan of Baloi. While admitting that his title as Sultan of Baloi did not amount to much, things started to change for the Sultan when his brother became elected as a *barangay* captain. As explained by different authors[37], the local executive in the Philippines has historically always been entitled to control coercive institutions. In

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[35] Interview with sultan Farouk Sharif, sultan of Taporog and member of the Lanao Advisory Council, Marawi city, 24.09.2013.

[36] FGD, municipality of Binidayan, 18.09.2013. Similar statements, albeit somewhat less direct were made in: FGD Municipality of Pantai Ragat , 24.09.2013; FGD Mariatao Tara, 16.09.2013. This was also a regular feature in different individual interviews. For instance, somewhat remarkable considering the aforementioned importance that was ascribed by Dr. Moctar Matuan to the indigenous polity in Maranao communities, when having an informal interview with Dr. Moctar Matuan, it was literately stated that: *'The power of the Sultans is being taken away by the state. These new political leaders and rich and the traditional leaders are poor'*. Interview Dr. Moctar Matuan, Institute of peace and development in Mindanao, Marawi City,24.09.2013. See also: Interview Attorney Abdul Alonto, Iligan, 22.09.13: *'Many young people laugh at the traditional leaders, they let them talk but they do not listen. They listen to the mayor, he's the guy with the money'*

[37] Sidel, John (1999), Capital, coercion and crime. Bossism in the Philippines, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 248; Hutchcroft, Paul (2000) Colonial Masters, National Politicos, and Provincial Lords: Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the American Philippines,1900-1913, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 59 (2), 277-306.

particular, these local executives have control over the PNP and a wide range of state-sanctioned coercive organisations (e.g. CVO, CAFGU, Barangay Tanods). In this specific case, a decision was made by the *barangay* captain to establish a CVO to tackle the rising night-time criminal activities along the highway between the towns of Marawi and Illigan. It was the Sultan who was appointed by his brother to head this CVO of about 100 people. For obvious reasons, the subsequent decline in criminal activity as a result of the regular nightly patrols of the CVO, significantly added to the symbolic and political capital, not only of the Sultan himself but also of the Sultanate of Baloi more generally, of which he was the symbolic representative.

This short story is illustrative for a broader dynamic which can be discerned all over the region. First, as already discussed, traditional authority as such no longer has a strong material basis (e.g. land, financial resources), neither does it have a truly enforceable legal and/or coercive basis. However, all of these material, legal and coercive means to exert influence and authority can be accessed through elected office. State formation in the Philippines has always been characterised by a high degree of autonomy by local politicians in the periphery *vis-à-vis* Manila. This autonomy has always been prominent in the way state-sanctioned coercive organisations ranging from the PNP to different para-military structures have been organised, not only at more decentralised levels, but also under the direct tutelage of elected politicians.[38] This is clear from the aforementioned story of the Sultan of Baloi. Although the Sultan himself was not elected, his family connection with his brother/*barangay* captain enabled him to become the leader of a CVO.[39] This dynamic, wherein politicians/traditional leaders actively deploy their authority over these organisations for private or wider clan purposes, is nothing new in the region. Particularly revealing in this regard is a book chapter by the American anthropologist G. Carter Bentley on Mohamad Ali Dimaporo.[40] Dimaporo, who is also of noble descent, was appointed in 1976 as acting governor of Lanao del Sur by president Marcos. Within this capacity and through different connections with mayors and *barangay* captains, Dimaporo began recruiting massive numbers of members for so-called Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF) units that were used as a private army to suppress any form of opposition or dissent in the province. Thus, under the tutelage of Dimaporo, the Marcos regime managed to organise an extensive counter insurgency against the MNLF and any other oppositional organisations of the time. In the meantime, the creation of these types of para-military private armies in combination with the start of an armed insurgency in the beginning of the seventies, gravely intensified the often violent nature of political competition in the region. Tellingly, Dimaporo ultimately lost his position as governor of Lanao del Sur after the outbreak of the People Power Revolution against President Marcos in 1986, not due to democratic procedures but because the rivaling alliance of clans violently captured the city of Marawi while Dimaporo was away.[41]

Apart from access to coercive means through elected office, a second pivotal basis for political authority was understood as the capacity for patronage. As mentioned in one FGD: *'If you have a*

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[38] Kreuzer, Peter (2009) Private Political Violence and Boss-Rule in the Philippines, *Behemoth*, 2(1), 47-63.

[39] This story is also illustrative for a dynamic wherein the armed capacity of the clan has a much more 'state-sanctioned character' than generally accounted for. It is a mistake to think that the armed capacity of clans can be solely understood as consisting of non-state or informal organisations. Instead, these are often constituted by a multitude of Barangay Tanods, CAFGU's, CVO's etc that are under direct control of elected politicians.

[40] Bentley, Carter G. (1993) Mohamad Ali Dimaporo: A Modern Maranao Datu, in Alfred W. McCoy (ed.), *An Anarchy of Families. State and Family in the Philippines*, University of Wisconsin: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 243-285.

[41] Bentley, Carter G. (1993), op.cit, p. 269. It is worth noting that the Dimaporo clan has since made a comeback, with Ali's son and then grandson serving as the Governors of Lanao del Norte, and other family members serving in the national Congress.

good salary you will get more respect' as this enables one *'to support the community'*.[42] This was also admitted by politicians/traditional leaders who considered this practice of patronage/support towards the community as a heavy burden.[43] For instance, the sultan of Toros (who was not a politician himself but whose family members monopolised all relevant political positions at the *barangay* at the time of the interview) estimated that 60% of all his financial resources were spent on so-called 'community services'.[44] There thus existed an expectation among large parts of the population that elected politicians should have a symbolic 'open door' to their house, as they should be accessible in case financial or other sorts of support were needed for community members. Based on the idea that when one lends something to somebody, one day this should be returned, this seemed to be particularly the case in relation to elections. When support (votes, participation in rallies, hanging of a banners etc.) was given to a certain politician at campaign time, it was expected that this would be returned.[45] In addition, the qualities ascribed to good leadership were often founded not on a refusal of this practice of patronage but rather on the particular ways these funds were (or were not) distributed.

This omnipresence of patronage in local politics in the province of Lanao del Sur is both a confirmation and somewhat of an aberration of a broader trend which plays out in the country as a whole. A particular historical pattern of state formation in the Philippines has always been characterised by vertically organised patronage networks tying the periphery to the political centre in Manila.[46] Local politicians are the pivotal actors within these networks as they deliver votes to higher-ranking politicians in exchange for state resources, often referred to as 'pork barrel'. Once more, this became obvious in the recent controversies concerning the so-called 'Pork Barrel Scam', wherein huge amounts of PDAF (Priority Development Assistance Funds) disappeared into the pockets of senators and congressional representatives through the establishment of phony NGOs. While discussions about this scandal focused on the 'corrupt nature' of politics in the Philippines, since many of these funds were siphoned off, this should foremost be understood as an illustration of how these PDAF funds acted as pivotal sources of patronage in two ways. First, it enabled the political centre in Manila to tie local politicians to them by providing them with funds over which they had a great deal of autonomy.[47] Secondly, these PDAF funds were being used strategically by congressmen to expand their political base, since they spent them on projects in their home region, thereby rewarding political allies and selectively buying in oppositional actors and organisations.[48] While these PDAF funds were destined for higher-ranking congressmen, by and large, the same dynamic plays out at the level of the municipality (mayor) and the barangay (barangay captain). Of central importance for these local institutional scales are the so-called IRA (Internal Revenue Allotment) funds which gained particular in importance after the 1991 decentralisation. In short, patronage state funding to reward followers, or to ward off oppositional coalitions, have always been at the heart of the political landscape throughout the Philippines. The privileged access to these funds gives a tactical political advantage over political opponents who remain deprived of these resources. Hence, the establishment of true oligarchic dynasties comes about, wherein political control often remains within the same elite coalition/family over different decades. As already remarked by Alfred McCoy in 1993, the emergence of powerful political families all over the Philippines should be explained by, 1) the

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[42] FGD sultanate of Madaya, Marawi city, 23.09.2013.
[43] Interview Macabangkit Ati, Marawi city, 23.09.2013.
[44] Interview Sultan Lomela Imam, Sultan of Toros, Marawi city, 26.09.2013.
[45] FGD Denian Rengco Clan, Kapatagan municipality, 25.09.2013.
[46] Hutchcroft, Paul (2000), op.cit.
[47] Berthelsen, John and Neumann, A. Lin (2013), Philippine Pork and Its Many Bedfellows, *Asia Sentinel*, September 13, 2013, (accessible at www.asiasentinel.com/politics/philippine-pork-and-its-many-bedfellows/)
[48] Eaton, Kent (2001) Political Obstacles to Decentralization: Evidence from Argentina and the Philippines, *Development and Change*, 32 (1), pp. 101–127.

rise of 'rents' as a significant share of the nation's economy and 2) a simultaneous attenuation of central government control over the provinces.[49] If one changes the concept of 'family' into 'clan', it is not so hard to see that the whole of Muslim Mindanao is following some very similar dynamics to the rest of the Philippines.

For these reasons, the practice wherein *'you support the community'* by distributing IRA funding, is definitely not something uniquely Maranao. On the other hand, this practice needs to be situated within a wider socio-economic landscape which is different compared to other places in the Philippines. Above all, the economic situation in Lanao del Sur is characterised by an exceptionally high degree of poverty and a very low level of capitalisation/industrialisation. For instance, in the 2013 Philippine Human Development Report,[50] the province of Lanao del Sur consistently ranks among the lowest on different development indicators. According to data by the National Statistical Coordination Board of the province, published by Mindanews, the province of Lanao del Sur was the poorest province of the whole country in 2012 with a poverty incidence of 68.9%, compared to a national average of 22.3%.[51] Lastly, intermittent periods of warfare between Muslim armed groups and the Philippine state and a political climate characterised by regular violent feuding, obstructed a structural development of a substantial industrial or service economy. Within this specific socio-economic landscape, the state, even more than in other parts of the Philippines, becomes the prime source of rent generation and job opportunities. As such, very much in line with the way customary authority was historically founded on control over land that defined people's livelihood in a rural economy, in many places in Lanao del Sur today, the one controlling state resources has a huge control over people's daily livelihoods in what can largely be defined as a state-led economy.

1.4 *RIDO* AND POLITICS

These two specific features - control over the means of coercion and access to state patronage in a region which is characterised by a high level of poverty - make the state the key arbiter in the way power relations are constituted in the region. It is also against this background that the issue of *rido* and clan needs to be understood, making clan a highly political concept in Lanao del Sur.[52] Clans are flexible kin-based social networks wherein clan affiliation runs along different genealogies. According to Carter Bentley, Maranao culture is characterised by so-called bilateral descent reckoning, wherein the succession of descent lines happens through both parents.[53] Quite logically, after a couple of generations this gives emergence to what Carter Bentley describes as a *'genealogical mare's nest'*, wherein *'Each claimant is likely to possess several claims of varying quality to each title, and no simple algorithm can predict which will take precedence'*.[54] Although Carter Bentley made this statement based on fieldwork in Lanao in the 1907s, this argument still applies to

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[49] McCoy, Alfred W. (1993), An Anarchy of Families': The Historiography of State and Family in the Philippines, in Alfred W. McCoy (ed.) *An Anarchy of Families. State and Family in the Philippines*, University of Wisconsin, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 9-10.

[50] HDN (2013), 2012/2013 Philippine Human Development Report, Manila: Human Development Network and United Nations Development Program. For instance, with a life expectancy of 53.8 at birth in 2009, Lanao del Sur ranks among the five worst performing provinces in the country.

[51] Arguillas, Carolyn O. (April 26, 2013), ARMM is poorest region in 2012 but poverty incidence dropped in island provinces, Mindanews (accessible at http://www.mindanews.com/governance/2013/04/26/armm-is-poorest-region-in-2012-but-poverty-incidence-dropped-in-island-provinces/)

[52] Interview Dr. Moctar Matuan, Institute of peace and development in Mindanao, Marawi City, 24/09/2013

[53] Bentley, Carter G. (1983) Maranao Mediation and the Reproduction of Social Hierarchy, *Windsor Yearbook of Access to Justice,* Vol. 3, p. 273.

[54] Bentley, Carter G. (1983), op.cit, p. 273.

contemporary Maranao culture as clan affiliations take all sorts of directions. At the same time, a historical lineage to a 'noble blood line' can be claimed by a very large share of the population. This genealogical complexity and the never-ending controversies between 'real' Sultans and 'fake' Sultans was one of the main reasons why TAF's partner organisation Rido Inc. insisted on writing up definitive clan genealogies that could shed an 'authoritative' light on these contentions. Not surprisingly, these clan genealogies could easily run into thousands of pages.

Thus, clans are not fixed units but should instead be approached as alliances in which membership is negotiable and belonging is fluid, especially at the level of the smaller sub-clans.[55] For instance, in the run-up to the municipal elections in 2013 in the municipality of Kapatagan, different sub-clans were intensively discussing which candidate to support.[56] When a final decision was ultimately made, a so-called *kanduli* or celebration was organised to openly state support for one particular candidate that placed this sub-clan within the coalition of the 'mother clan'. However, these alliances are never fixed and can easily change in the run-up to new elections. The highly flexible character of clan membership and related traditional positions was remarkable and was considered by many as an important added value of the traditional system. In some cases, this flexibility in relation to clan membership and traditional positions could take a remarkably pragmatic turn. For instance, as explained by the Sultan of Toros, Lomela Imam: *'When we were building our mosque, we needed extra money, to solicit extra money we made 5 sultans'*.[57] Quite logically, these types of practices have caused an inflation in the number of Sultans over the past decades and people have started complaining about issues of 'corruption' or 'moral degradation' affecting this traditional field. As stated by one history professor at Mindanao State University in Marawi: *'... every day Sultans are being enthroned, young kids call themselves Sultans. Who would ever believe them?'*[58]

This complexity does not mean that clear-cut fault lines did not previously exist between different clans or constellations of clans. For instance, Maranao politics has historically always been characterised by a fierce competition between the Alonto clan, which has been associated with the Muslim armed groups, and the Dimaporo clan, which has been associated with numerous counterinsurgency efforts by Manila.[59] However, in other cases, contradictions are not so fixed, especially at the level of the so-called sub-clan which has a more distant affiliation to the mother clan. Within these schisms, although this is definitely no *'simple algorithm'*,[60] these clan affiliations are mainly constituted against the background of access to state patronage.[61] The majority of conflicts that were recorded throughout our qualitative fieldwork therefore played out between clans and were mostly related to electoral politics. In general, these conflicts tended to have a strong bipartisan character, wherein obvious tensions exist between a coalition of 'losers' (opposition) and a coalition of 'winners' (incumbent administration). Due to the reasons described above (privileged access to state patronage and control coercive organisations), it tends to be a quality of the incumbent administration to systematically win successive elections.[62] In a number of the municipalities

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[55] FGD Polonian Emirates Marawi city, 26.09.2013.
[56] FGD Denian Rengco Clan, Kapatagan municipality, 25.09.2013.
[57] Interview Sultan Lomela Imam, Sultan of Toros, Marawi city, 26.09.2013.
[58] As the Sultan of Toros, Lomelo Islam remarked when he discussed the link between clan allegiance and elections: *'... in politics there are no lasting friends, there are only temporary alliances'* interview Sultan Lomela Imam, Sultan of Toros, Marawi city, 26.09.2013.
[59] Bentley, Carter G. (1993) op.cit.
[60] Bentley, Carter G. (1983), op.cit, p. 273.
[61] Interview Dr. Moctar Matuan, Institute of peace and development in Mindanao, Marawi City, 24/09/2013 Interview Sultan Lomela Imam, Sultan of Toros, Marawi city, 26.09.2013.
[62] For a deeper analysis of the emergence of these types of 'authoritarian enclaves' throughout electoral democracy, see: Franco, Jennifer (2005). *Elections and democratization in the Philippines*. New York: Routledge

researched, these bipartisan political tensions were followed by one or more murders.[63] In the municipality of Kapatagan, members of one specific clan openly confirmed that they were actively mobilising young men and collecting firearms after they had (unexpectedly) lost the elections a couple of months before our field visit.[64] These findings correspond with the data derived from the TAF rido study, wherein 'politics' is considered to be the prime source of *rido* in the province. In this regard, rather than ascribing *rido* to state weakness, *rido* should be analysed in relation to an omnipresent state as the ultimate source of power, patronage and prestige.

1.5 CONCLUSION

In this first section, we have challenged the 'weak state/strong traditions' argument which served as a guiding rationale for the specific conflict management strategy deployed by TAF and its partner organisations in Lanao del Sur. Importantly, our critique does not intend to turn the tables simply into a reverse 'strong state/weak traditions' argument. It is correct that tradition *per se* lacks a coercive or material basis for effective authority claims and the specific 'symbolic capital' supposedly associated with this traditional leadership seems to be confined. Rather, there existed a consensus that politicians were the most powerful people in the community. Remarkably, however, throughout our different interviews and FGDs, not one politician could be encountered who did not claim lineage to a noble blood line and in many cases, the mayor or barangay captain was a traditional leader him/herself. In other words, a remarkable convergence seemed to exist between politics and tradition in Lanao del Sur, that directly serves as the prime explanation for the internal social differentiation in terms of such things as status, wealth, and influence that could be encountered among traditional leaders. The need to combine a traditional position with an elected mandate was also felt strongly among many traditional leaders. As explained by the Sultan of the Mariato Tara clan: *'The advantage of the dual position is that the people respect you, recognize you, they will follow you whatever you say. If you are PNP, mayor nobody will oppose you because the people have a big respect for you.'*[65]

What all these statements point to is that the state cannot just be cast away as a 'lame duck' but instead is a pivotal player in the socio-political landscape. The state in Lanao del Sur can indeed not be understood as an ideal type, impersonal Weberian bureaucracy. Very much on the contrary, the state in Lanao del Sur is utterly personalised considering the exceptionally high leverage the local executive has in the allocation of state patronage funds and the composition of state sanctioned coercive organisations. However, it is precisely throughout this personalised character that the state in Lanao del Sur obtains its relevance. Therefore, the weak state hypothesis needs deeper elaboration and is inappropriate, as it is formulated today, to adequately assess the socio-political landscape in Lanao del Sur (and presumably also in other places in Mindanao). Rather, a more adequate analysis should start from a better insight into the everyday practices of patronage/control over livelihoods and coercion, which still constitute the basis of power and authority in the region.

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and Quimpo, Nathan. G. (2008). *Contested Democracy and the left in the Philippines after Marcos*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
[63] FGD Balabagan municipal Peace Committee, 25.09.2013; FGD municipality of Binidayan, 18.09.2013.
[64] FGD Denian Rengco Clan, Kapatagan municipality, 25/09/2013.
[65] FGD Mariatao Tara, Marawi city, 16.09.2013.

PART 2: HYBRID INSTITUTIONS OR HYBRID PRACTICES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The fundamental question that follows from the observations above, is what effect all this has on the workings of conflict management and dispute settlement in the region. Does the omnipresence of state and electoral politics in Lanao del Sur imply that formal conflict management institutions have the necessary capacity and legitimacy to cope with violent tensions? Is the reach of traditional conflict management institutions systematically being overrated? And how to account for the utterly personalised capture of state institutions? In short, how do we estimate the effectiveness of different conflict management institutions in a socio-political landscape which can be understood as consisting of quasi-authoritarian enclaves wherein the local executive has a near total monopoly over coercive organisations and privileged access to state patronage funds?

2.2 FORMAL PUNITIVE JUSTICE VERSUS AMICABLE SETTLEMENT

Before we can start delving deeper into some of these questions, it is necessary to have a better understanding of how people interpret and give meaning to some of the categories and concepts which are key to the ToC as it is formulated by TAF. As explained above, although the concept of hybridity is formulated as an interaction between formal and informal institutions, how and at what level this interaction should be understood, and how sustainable these interactions are considered to be, remains vague. Moreover, in daily conversation and consultation, rather than pointing at a true interaction, this concept of hybridity was primarily used to denote the prominence of informal institutions and the limited capacity of formal governance structures.

Interestingly, when discussing conflict management and dispute settlement with a variety of respondents, the crucial distinction that was made was not one between a set of formal versus informal conflict management institutions, but rather one of formal punitive justice versus amicable settlement/informal reconciliation. The difference between these two practices of conflict management is obvious. With formal punitive justice, a whole range of formal state procedures is being referred to, through which a perpetrator(s) is charged and then judged by a court. On the other hand, amicable settlement is understood as a process of informal consultation wherein conflicting parties try to reach an agreement to their dispute. In general, this consultation is then concluded through an agreement on the amount of blood money that needs to be paid as compensation for the harm inflicted. The fundamental issue here is that amicable settlement cannot simply be equated with traditional or informal institutions, but is also practiced through different types of formal governance structures. This is a crucial observation if one truly wants to grasp the complexities and hybrid characteristics of conflict management in Lanao. However, before elaborating more systematically on this issue, it is necessary first to give an assessment of the specific positive and negative evaluations made of these two conflict management practices.

Overall, it was obvious that people had a much more positive assessment of amicable settlement when compared to formal justice delivery. However, one should be careful not to give a uniquely culturalist interpretation for this observation as if 'the Maranao' would consider any form of formal justice delivery intrusive or incompatible to their cultural practices. Although differing opinions existed on this matter, numerous respondents did not consider formal justice delivery through formal state institutions as something negative *per se*. On the contrary, although it was regularly pointed out that minor incidents could be settled perfectly well through amicable settlement, many deemed it desirable

that large-scale violent incidents and offences such as murder would be settled by formal and neutral, impersonal state institutions.[66] Therefore, the critique that was being formulated did not necessarily concern the nature of formal punitive justice. Rather, there was an overall negative appreciation about the slowness and bureaucratic nature of formal justice delivery as it exists at this very moment.[67] As stated by one respondent: *'The wheels of justice are so slow at grinding that people take the right into their own hands'*.[68] Moreover, due to the high financial costs associated with this formal punitive justice, it was considered to be inaccessible for the majority of the population.[69] As a result, preference was given to faster practices of mediation and amicable settlement. In particular, the speed with which a settlement could be reached through amicable settlement was considered as extremely important, since any further escalation of the conflict/*rido* could be avoided as quickly as possible.[70] Another advantage that was mentioned is that a process of informal mediation and reconciliation is much more sustainable when compared to formal punitive justice. As some people stated, when somebody was incarcerated for a couple of years, the *rido* simply started again when this particular person was released from prison. This was not considered the case with amicable settlement as a consensus was reached between the parties/families involved. For all these reasons, the large majority of the disputes in Lanao del Sur are being handled through amicable settlement rather than formal adjudication. Importantly, these findings confirm earlier observations that were made in other parts of Muslim Mindanao for this research project.[71]

2.2 THE HYBRID NATURE OF INFORMAL RECONCILIATION

As mentioned, it would be wrong to situate these initiatives of reconciliation and amicable settlement uniquely within a traditional/informal institutional field. It is therefore crucial to make a clear conceptual distinction between certain practices of conflict management and the specific institutional fora or arena wherein these are being deployed. This is particularly obvious when studying the 'formal' institution of the Municipal Peace and Order council. This council was originally set up by the Marcos regime as a counterinsurgency instrument against all forms of (armed) opposition to his regime.[72] Currently, these Peace and Order Councils/Committees are composed of the counterparts of government agencies and are respectively chaired by the municipal mayor or barangay captain.[73] There is also a mandatory representation of civil society, which can consist of a range of organisations including traditional and religious ones. Above all, however, this council stands under direct control of the local executive and therefore uniquely consists of allies/relatives of the incumbent administration. Quite logically, since the major objective of these councils is understood as being *'deliberation of major issues and problems affecting peace and order, including insurgency'*[74], they

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[66] Interview Attorney Ramos, RRUC, Marawi City, 30.09.2013; FGD municipality of Pantai Ragat, 24.09.2013; FGD sultanate of Madaya; Marawi city, 23.09.2013

[67] Interview Sultan Lomela Imam, Sultan of Toros, Marawi city, 26.09.2013.

[68] Prof. Sarangani, ex vice president MSU, Marawi City, 2.10.2013.

[69] This perception about the inaccessibility of formal justice corresponds with more general findings for the rest of the Philippines. Once again, Lanao del Sur and the whole of Muslim Mindanao do not constitute an exception in this regard compared to other places in the country, see: Franco, Jenny C. (2008). Peripheral Justice? Rethinking Justice Sector Reform in the Philippines. *World Development*, 36(10), 1858–1873.

[70] Interview Sultan Lomela Imam, Sultan of Toros, Marawi city,26.09.2013.

[71] Adam, Jeroen; Verbrugge, Boris and Vanden Boer, Dorien (2014a), op.cit.

[72] At the level of the barangay, these are called 'Peace and Order Committee'.

[73] Important ones include the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), and representatives of the state security sector (AFP, PNP).

[74] For full text of the executive order see www.lawphil.net/executive/execord/eo2009/eo_773_2009.html.

constituted the foremost and first place wherein the settlement of violent disputes and feuds was discussed.[75] Yet, the procedural logic, through which many of the cases were settled, was of an utterly informal nature despite close supervision by the Council and/or the local executive.[76] Due to this informal nature, the actual process of mediation was highly diverse and case-specific, as the parties concerned had a great say over the actual sequence of the events. When studying this amicable settlement, two important remarks need to be made. Firstly, a general sense of ownership exists as the parties themselves can determine the intensity, sequence and overall speed of the consultation process. Secondly, despite the supervision of politicians, an important place for traditional leaders as the *'one's knowing the right words'* still remained and thereby added symbolic weight to the whole process.[77] Herein, customary practices provide some sort of script or ceremonial logic through which the amicable settlement could be organised. At the same time, this puts forward different normative standards. For instance, various public manifestations are organised where the parties concerned have to swear not to break certain vows that are considered as key to the successful conclusion of the whole process.[78]

This hybridity wherein an interaction takes place between traditional/informal practices of mediation within formal state institutions, occurs not only in the Peace and Order Council/Committee. Even when a case is filed in a formal court, it could be decided that the case will be referred to other agencies where a process of informal consultation and amicable settlement will be organised. As was confirmed by one attorney working in the city of Illigan, different venues exist where what he called 'alternative dispute resolution' was being applied. The advantages that this attorney ascribed to alternative dispute resolution are very similar to those that were expressed in the more general FGD's, namely: flexibility, ownership and the swiftness of the whole process. Within alternative dispute resolution a surprising variety of arenas were mentioned, such as annexes to the court, the prosecutor or police officers through which amicable settlement could be reached in a perfectly legal way.[79] In addition, the Philippines has been experimenting for a while with so-called 'Judicial Dispute Resolution' in the First And Second Level Courts of the Philippine Judicial System.[80] Through this 'Judicial Dispute Resolution', it is expected that: *'mediation and conciliation at the level of the judge would contribute significantly to the resolution of mediatable cases, thereby increasing the satisfaction of litigants in the court process and also helping to decongest the dockets of the judiciary.'*[81] In other words, a whole range of formalised legal spaces exists through which amicable settlement can be reached and this does not necessarily create contradictions and is something that is necessarily being practiced in the shadow of Philippine judicial law. All these types of mediation therefore come close to what TAF considers as hybrid institutions of conflict management as the

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[75] FGD, Balabagan municipal Peace and Order Council, 25.09.2013.

[76] FGD, municipality of Binidayan, 18.09.2013.

[77] Interview Pogie Atar, chairman Rido Inc., Marawi city, 13.09.2013.

[78] This was not only the case with interventions of amicable settlement but played out in a whole range of public and personal events such as births, marriages… In most cases, these events are joined by traditional and religious authorities who make wordy and somewhat tedious statements. Interestingly, as one of these traditional leaders personally remarked after he wished a couple of newlyweds good fortune and pointed them to their duties and obligations, hardly anybody in the audience truly grasps what was being said, in particular among the young people. This is even more the case with religious authorities/scholars as they regularly use Arabic.

[79] Interview Attorney Abdul Alonto, Iligan, 22.09.2013.

[80] Philippine Ministry of Justice (2006) The JDR Guide 2006. Operations Manual For Judicial Dispute Resolution (JDR) in the First And Second Level Courts of the Philippine Judicial System; Manila: Philippine Ministry of Justice.

[81] Philippine Ministry of Justice (2006) op.cit, p. i. Interestingly, in this official manual for judges wishing to successfully use this 'Judicial Dispute Resolution', it is openly suggested for the judge to: *'Wear regular civilian clothes, not judge's robe'*.

practice of amicable settlement cannot just be confined to the traditional or informal sphere. Rather, different types of formal institutions come to act as venues wherein these practices of mediation are being applied. Or as sultan Shatta Raraco, member of the Municipal Peace and Order Council in Binidayan stated when asked about the distinction between formal and informal conflict management: *'In fact, it is hard to put in a diagram'*.[82]

2.3 RECONCILIATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Notwithstanding this high level of hybridity and complexity, a large consensus on one aspect of this process of amicable settlement existed, namely that this was a costly enterprise. First of all, there is the organisation of public meetings, at which a wide range of authorities are supposed to be present and food and drink are provided for the whole community.[83] Secondly, the payment of blood money constitutes a central part of amicable settlement practices and in general, it is the third party mediator who is considered to be responsible for the payment of this blood money.[84] In some other cases, blood money was paid by the mediator and/or the culprit For instance, in the municipality of Kapatagan, an arrangement existed that 50% had to be paid by the perpetrator and 50% by the mediator. This first 50% did not necessarily have to come out of the pockets of the culprit him/herself and this was often provided by a patron or richer member of the family. Quite remarkably, however, this other 50% was simply understood as money coming from the LGU (Local Government Unit), thus directly indicating the close relationship between the role of politicians as mediators and the fact that state resources are directly used in these practices.[85] This clearly hints at a hybrid interaction between a traditional practice (payment of blood money) and a formal governance structure (Peace and Order Council), through government funds (IRA). In general, it is very rare that blood money is paid by the culprit him/herself and in general, this is taken care of on his/her behalf by people with access to substantial financial resources. However, considering that the state is the foremost source of rent generation in the region, having access to state resources, more particularly IRA (Internal Revenue Allotment) funds, was considered to be the foremost condition for becoming a capable mediator. As mentioned in one FGD: *'All needs, all resources are in the LGU and money is very important to settle these cases'*.[86] This was also considered as an important added value of the Municipal Peace and Order Council, as this institution stood under the direct control of the mayor who was considered to have the necessary financial resources for mediation and whose decision was considered to be binding.[87] On the other hand, the intervention of traditional leaders was considered as less fundamental, apart from providing some sort of symbolic weight. The explanation for this goes back to observations made earlier, namely the lack of access to financial resources and a lack of control over any credible coercive organisations by these traditional leaders. This was also confirmed through an interview with the Sultan of Tara wherein he stated that *'The power of the sultan is grabbed by the mayors, barangay captains. They can give money to the offended party. The people lose their confidence in the sultan because we do not have money, can't solve the problems… We lost power and control over people in the barangay'*[88]

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[82] FGD municipality of Binidayan, 18.09.2013.
[83] In different cases, these meetings were being financed by international NGOs such as TAF, although TAF had an official policy not to pay any of the blood money required to reach a settlement.
[84] Interview Attorney Ramos, Regional Reconciliation and Unification Commission, Marawi City, 30.09.2013.
[85] FGD Denian Rengco Clan, municipality of Kapatagan, 25.09.2013.
[86] FGD Municipality of Pantai Ragat, 24.09.2013.
[87] FGD Municipality of Poona Piagapo, 17.09.2013.
[88] FGD Mariato Tara, Marawi city, 16.09.2013.

This citation cannot only be understood as a confirmation of the secondary role played by traditional leaders, this also points to the practice of conflict management as key in the build-up of authority and credible leadership. This could also be witnessed in the presence of a whole range of politicians, army and police personnel, and traditional leaders at public reconciliation meetings. Although most of these people did not play a substantial role in the peaceful conclusion of a dispute, these public appearances should be understood as attempts to take some of the credit for the initiative. As argued elsewhere, mediation is a primary 'route to power' as this ultimately demonstrates a range of capacities which are central to the build-up of public authority.[89] As a result, it is as much in the interest of the mediating third party to reach a successful settlement as it is for the two disputing parties. Reaching a settlement hereby demonstrates the capacity to make people comply with certain decisions; and there is a demonstrated capacity for careful deliberation and consultation in a volatile environment. Also, the reinstatement of an overall climate of sustainable peace tends to be something that is welcomed by large parts of the population. Although stronger ethnographic data based on a longer period of fieldwork in one locality are needed to fully substantiate this claim, our fieldwork data indicate that the prominence of amicable settlement confirms existing power relations, and reinforces the position of elected politicians.

2.4 CONCLUSION

As explicitly mentioned in one focus group discussion in the municipality of Poona Piagapo: *'If you are in the government, you can still implement the traditional law'*.[90] The most important conclusion that can be drawn from this second part therefore is that one clearly sees the emergence of something that can be called hybrid institutions of conflict management in Lanao del Sur. This hybridity should be understood as an interaction wherein formal governance institutions serve as venues in which informal practices of conflict mediation are being deployed. These informal practices can be divided into two major parts: (i) a more general process of informal consultation wherein a third party acts as a mediator between the two conflicting parties. We have illustrated this point through the formal institution of the Peace and Order Council/Committee which served as an institutional arena wherein amicable settlement and reconciliation could be discussed and monitored. Importantly, legal spaces are also provided within formal criminal law, where amicable settlement can be reached. Therefore, it would be wrong to understand this amicable settlement as something by definition conducted outside, or in the shadow of, formal law; (ii) in varying degrees, a range of cultural practices are being deployed within this amicable settlement which add a certain symbolic weight but above all serve as normative anchor points which provide a structure and sequence to this process. In particular two issues stand out in this regard: the importance of a public ceremony (*kanduli*) wherein both parties swear not to break the agreement; and the payment of blood money as a compensation for the harm inflicted. However, none of this can be put in some sort of fixed scenario. For instance, there are cases in which the party on the victim's side has refused to receive any blood money; although preference was given for a process of amicable settlement. As such, this hybrid interaction is above all of a highly improvised, variable and *ad hoc* nature. This is also one of the main advantages ascribed to amicable settlement, in the sense that this flexibility presumes a genuine sense of ownership and agency. Moreover, if it is pursued by the parties concerned, this process can be exceptionally fast when compared to formal punitive justice. In any strategy of conflict management this is an unmistakable advantage, as this considerably reduces the possibility of a further escalation of the dispute. Nevertheless, despite the prominence of this informal amicable settlement, we have also

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[89] Bentley, Carter G. (1983), op.cit.
[90] FGD Municipality of Poona Piagapo 17.09.2013.

illustrated how the local executive remains in control of these initiatives and traditional authorities are only secondary at best. This can only be understood in relation to the observations put forward in Part 1 of this paper where we described how elected politicians are key players in the local socio-political landscape of Lanao del Sur.

PART 3: DISCUSSION

3.1 BACKGROUND TO THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

The crucial importance ascribed to hybrid institutions by TAF within their conflict management strategy resonates with a growing popularity of the concept of hybridity among academics, policy makers and development workers.[91] Yet, an analysis of the TAF interpretation of hybridity in relation to this broader literature - which will be referred to as the HPO literature - is missing so far. This section of our paper will confront the rationale(s) behind the ToC and the empirical findings we discussed, with this broader literature. We will refer here in particular to two, widely cited, bodies of work. The first consists of a team of researchers who have published work around the emergence of hybrid institutions in a group of Pacific countries.[92] The second body of work is a range of articles and books, published by the influential scholar Oliver Richmond.[93] These two bodies of work are further complemented with other articles which focus on the issue of hybridity in relation to conflict management and peace building.[94] We do not pretend to cover the whole thematic literature with this exercise. Rather, we wish to open up the debate and offer some fresh perspectives on the issues discussed above through the eyes of some influential authors.

We turn first to the work by Boege et al. on a range of Pacific countries (Timor-Leste, Bougainville, Melanesia and Polynesia). Their argument starts from a stringent critique of the so-called

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[91] For this part, we will only refer to literature which explicitly takes up the issue of hybridity in relation to conflict management and peace building and specifically adds a 'prescriptive' component whereby these hybrid institutions are deliberately created, engineered or supported in an effort to reach a more peaceful society.

[92] A particularly influential paper by this group of researchers is: Boege V., Brown A., Clements K. and Nolan, A. (2008*) On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: State Formation in the Context of 'Fragility'*, Berlin: Berghof Research Center
(http://edoc.vifapol.de/opus/volltexte/2011/2595/pdf/boege_etal_handbook.pdf) Another important article is: Clements, Kevin P.; Boege, Volker; Brown, Anne; Foley, Wendy and Nolan, Anne (2007), 'State Building Reconsidered. The Role of Hybridity in the Formation of Political Order', *Political Science*, 59 (1) pp.45-56. For an interesting collection of critiques by different authors on the 2008 Boege et al. paper, see: Fischer, Martina and Schmelzle, Beatrix (ed.) (2009), *Building Peace in the Absence of States. Challenging the Discourse on State Failure,* Berlin: Berghof Research Center (for full text see: www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Dialogues/dialogue8_failingstates_complete.pdf)

[93] Richmond, Oliver P. (2007) 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism: Liberal-Local Hybridity via the Everyday as a Response to the Paradoxes of Peacebuilding', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3 (3) pp. 324-344; Richmond, Oliver P. (2012a) 'A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding: Infrapolitics, Resistance and Liberation', *International Political Sociology*, 6: 115-131; Richmond, Oliver P. and Mitchell, Audra (2012b) (eds.), *Hybrid Forms of Peace, Palgrave/Macmillan,311. From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*, Palgrave/Macmillan; Richmond, Oliver P. and Mac Ginty, Roger (2013), 'The Local Turn in Peacebuilding: a critical agenda for peace', *Third World Quarterly*, 34 (5), pp. 763-783.

[94] We would specifically like to refer in this regard to Millar, Gearoid (2014) 'Disaggregating Hybridity: Why hybrid institutions do not produce predictable experiences of peace', *Journal of Peace Research*, 51 (4) pp. 501-514; Jarstad, Anna K. and Belloni, Roberto (2012) 'Introducing Hybrid Peace Governance: Impact and Prospects of Liberal Peacebuilding', *Global Governance*, 18: 1-6.

fragile/failed states literature, and more particularly the notion that this fragility would be a structural hindrance to any form of sustainable peace and development. In this regard, they take a clear position in a much older debate which goes back to the nature of violent conflict since the end of the Cold War. As different authors have convincingly argued, the end of the Cold War resulted in the drying up of a system of international patronage, either from the USSR or the US, and therefore resulted in a dramatic decrease of the overall capacity of different developing countries to provide basic public services for their citizens.[95] A range of authors considered this dynamic wherein formal state capacity weakened or even became almost inexistent as problematic and potentially dangerous, not only for the people directly affected but also more generally for global stability.[96] In other words, these authors perceived state failure/collapse/fragility as negative by definition, or a sort of 'pathological' breakdown of society.[97]

In contrast to this 'state fragility as breakdown' discourse, Boege et al. propose a much more positive perspective. They acknowledge that in many places in the world - including some of the Pacific countries they have been studying - the state is indeed not the sole regulating framework. For instance, they explicitly talk about *'outposts of the state in a societal environment that is to a large extent 'stateless'*.[98] It is in these outposts that formal state structures are being mediated through kin-based institutions, hereby shaping specific hybrid institutions. However, these hybrid institutions or other informal forms of public authority are not necessarily approached as something problematic *per se* which need to be replaced by imported 'western-style' institutions. Instead, these authors take a much more pragmatic stance in which they attempt to work with the institutions available. The main advantage of these hybrid institutions is that they have historically and organically grown and therefore have a strong social embeddedness, thereby generating a sense of continuity, trust and order.[99]

Based on this assessment, Boege et al. formulate some ideas on the type of peace and state building interventions that need to be conducted. According to the authors, the interpretation of state fragility as a breakdown, or an anomaly, gave rise to a specific type of state intervention which is obsessed with re-building the ideal-type of 'Western' state, characterised by an impersonal bureaucracy, private property rights and open markets.[100] Boege et al. refer to this as the *'western OECD model'* of state building which is solely focused on rebuilding a *'western-style Weberian/Westphalian state'*.[101] In

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[95] An interesting author describing this crucial transition for the Sub-Saharan African region is William Reno, see: Reno, W. (1999), *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder: Rienner, 257.

[96] A prominent example is the edited book by Zartman, W. (ed.), 1995, *Collapsed States: the disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority*, Boulder: Rienner, 303. Another influential article, albeit not explicitly using the term 'state collapse/failure' is by the American journalist Kaplan, R. (1994), 'The Coming Anarchy. How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet', *The Atlantic Monthly,* February 1994 (accessible at www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/304670/)

[97] Raymaekers, Timothy (2005) 'Collapse or Order? Questioning State Collapse in Africa', Conflict Research Group, Working Paper No. 1. (accessible at: www.psw.ugent.be/crg/Publications/working%20papers/QuestioningStateCollapse.pdf)

[98] Boege et.al (2008), op.cit, p. 6.

[99] Clements, Kevin (2007), op.cit, p. 47.

[100] Obviously, the argument that governance 'outside' or in the 'shadow' of the state is not by definition problematic, is not restricted to the HPO literature and has already been made in a wide range of publications. Although these authors did not always frame their arguments through a hybridity lens, many of these authors have pointed to the potential sustainable governance outcomes that can emerge from the interaction between informal groups and institutions and formal governance structures. For an excellent overview of relevant literature and debates on this issue, see: Hoffman, Kasper and Kirk, Tom (2013), 'Public Authority and the Provision of Public Goods in Conflict-Affected and Transitioning Regions', LSE, London: JSRP Paper 7.

[101] Boege et.al (2008), op.cit., p. 2

their view, these types of interventions are inevitably bound to fail as international organisations artificially try to impose a certain statist order which does not match local cultural practices and heavily distorts historically grown social structures. An important case-study illustrating this point is found in East Timor. In this country - which gained its independence in 2002 after years of brutal Indonesian occupation - the UN pursued what they consider as a *'misguided state building from scratch'*.[102] This state-building effort was solely focused on political elites in the capital and did not take into account historically grown forms of indigenous governance in the countryside. As a result, a state has been introduced which a large part of the population considers as alien and imposed. In a chapter solely devoted to this case of Timor-Leste, Anne Brown (one of the co-authors of the team) and Alex Gusmao give a more detailed account of a wide range of customary democratic practices in Timor Leste which they explicitly entitle *'hybrid orders'*.[103] In their view, different UN administrations have grossly overlooked these manifestations of hybrid local democracy and hereby missed an exceptional opportunity to install a state structure which would have been more stable and supportive of sustainable peace.[104]

Based on these assessments, a bottom-up approach of state-building is promoted in which the role of international organisations is confined to 'prudent policies' wherein support is provided for native hybrid institutional frameworks that manage to provide security. As such, the type of interventions being put forward are moderate interventions which depart from everyday realities, instead of ideal types of what the perfect state should look like. The (presumably failed) example of East Timor is then contrasted with the cases of Bougainville and Somaliland, where a state with a high level of security has been built after a period of warfare through an organic bottom-up process, and where the role of external organisations was confined to that of facilitator. With this argument, Boege et al. build further on a stream of literature that developed from the 1990s onwards and which critiques the centralised and top-down character of different peacebuilding interventions. As an alternative, this literature tries to emphasise the pivotal role of the 'local', in the sense that peacebuilding interventions need to be adapted to a diversity of political, social and cultural contexts. Even more so, the local is perceived as an exceptional resource for successful and sustainable peacebuilding and conflict management strategies. For instance, an influential author such as Lederach explicitly sees tradition and traditional leaders as exceptional resources for initiatives of peacebuilding and reconciliation as they have a strong social legitimacy.[105] In this sense, it is only a small step away from the argument which states that that *'the only way to make state institutions work is through utilising kin-based and other traditional networks'*.[106]

Similar arguments can be encountered in the work of the British academic Oliver Richmond. Richmond starts his analysis from what he considers as the failures of the liberal peace model. In

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[102] Boege et.al (2008), op.cit., p. 11.

[103] Brown, Anne and Gumao, Alex (2012)' Looking for the Owner of the House – Who is Making Peace in Rural East Timor', in Richmond, Oliver P. and Mitchell, Audra (2012b) (eds*.), Hybrid Forms of Peace. From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*, Palgrave/Macmillan, pp. 107-131.

[104] Note that the question of whether the different UN interventions in East Timor can be considered as a success is still a matter of contention, with some people stating that the UN simply gave birth to a failed state (see: Chopra, Jarat (2002), 'Building State Failure in East Timor', *Development and Change*, 33(5): 979-1000) Others, such as the authors stated above, are highly critical of the lack of attention for native forms of governance and democracy in the post-conflict state building effort by the UN; while others state that this was one of the great success stories in the history of the UN, (see: Myrttinen, H. (2009). 'Timor-Leste. A relapsing "success" story', *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 5(1): 219-239.)

[105] Lederach, P. (1997), *Building Peace. Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies,* Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, p. 197.

[106] Boege et al. (2008), op.cit., p. 7

short, the liberal peace that emerged after the end of the Cold War and was crafted in the headquarters (New York, London, Washington DC, Brussels) of international organisations, consists of a universal package of free market policies and the installment, or recrafting, of formal core state institutions (judiciary, police etc.). These interventions are then concluded by the organisation of free and democratic elections which are supposed to pave the way for the installment of a legitimate state apparatus and durable peace. There are several critiques of this model that have been formulated by Richmond and that are shared by the large majority of authors situated within the HPO literature.[107] There is the issue that these programmes are prone to capture by predatory elites, and in too many cases these have simply failed to deliver their promises of sustainable peace and development (among the examples mentioned, reference is made to Afghanistan, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste). However, the core problem is that these policies are being implemented without any careful deliberation with local populations and their specific expectations, interpretations and understandings of what comprises a truly sustainable peace. This is due to the hegemonic, ideological nature of this project which considers the imposition of liberal, rights-based democracy and free markets as the only possible avenues to reach peace and install a legitimate state. Within this vision, the local is considered as being 'deviant' and therefore a mere hindrance to the success of the project. For instance, Richmond considers that it is typical of the arrogance of the proponents of liberal peace that the recurrent failures of their interventions are not explained through some of the flawed underpinnings of their paradigm. Rather, failures are solely ascribed to the 'recalcitrant' behavior of the local which seems not to understand the many benefits of rights-based democracy.[108] While ideas about civil society and participation do circulate in this paradigm, these are only taken into account when they fit the prescribed liberal norms and values. As a result, local populations have mainly been approached as voiceless subjects, instead of mature citizens.

However, within this critique, an even deeper underlying issue can be detected. As Richmond literally states: '… *contemporary neo/liberalism is plausible mainly in Western developed contexts, and applied elsewhere (as in the West) may be socially atomizing, hegemonic and lead to the valorization of predatory elites who gain easy access to an international economic and political cartography'*.[109] In other words, many of the liberal assumptions underpinning these interventions are considered to be incompatible with local cultural standards and social structures in most of the non-Western world. This critique by Richmond contains important similarities with the work of Boege et al. Although Boege et al. do not focus their critique explicitly on the 'liberal' underpinnings, they also reject peace and state building interventions which have a universal blueprint character and therefore fail to take into account historically grown social formations and institutions. In addition, both accounts have a clear culturalist rationale to them, as they consider the bulk of contemporary interventions to be hegemonic and founded on Western norms and values. While Richmond explicitly speaks of Western, liberal standards, Boege et al. refer to these interventions as based on a '*Western OECD model'*. Most importantly however, due to this hegemonic and blueprint character, many of these interventions overrule local, indigenous governance structures and therefore fail to create a truly durable and legitimate state framework which is considered necessary to reach sustainable peace.

As an alternative, both ask for more attention to local agency. Although never explicitly mentioned as such, Boege et al. see this local agency above all as being indigenous structures of governance which, ideally, become part of a more consultative and integrative approach towards peace and state building. For Richmond, this local agency is conceptualised somewhat more philosophically as a sort of

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[107] Hoffman, Kasper and Kirk, Tom (2013), op.cit., p. 18
[108] Richmond, Oliver P. (2012a), op.cit., p. 116.
[109] Richmond, Oliver P. (2009), op.cit., p. 326

resistance and opposition which can play out in a wide diversity of organisations and institutions. The local is hereby understood as: *'a dangerous and wild place where Western rationality, with its diktats of universality and modernisation, is challenged in different ways.'*[110] It is through this resistance that an interaction emerges between the hegemonic liberal peace paradigm and local, subaltern meanings and understandings of peace and it is through this interaction that Richmond defines the concept of hybridity. In the words of Richmond, this hybridity emerges thus: *'The top down will trickle down to the bottom, and the bottom-up will then engage in a democratic process, which will bring to life a social contract in classic liberal fashion'.*[111] In this manner, the local and the international mutually influence each other, based on an equal status. It is also within the emergence of these types of hybridities that Richmond makes an argument for a post-liberal peace wherein local agency is seriously taken into account.[112] In this regard, Richmond also speaks about a 'pedagogy of peace' wherein a dialogic relation is being established between the most and the least marginalised.[113] Throughout this dialogic relation, peacebuilding can never become a universal and homogeneous exercise but is instead marked by diversity and variation. Clearly, this interpretation of hybridity is different from the interpretation given by Boege et al. As explained, Boege et al. perceive this hybridity within a long-term historical process of state formation which happens through the interaction between indigenous structures and (post-)colonial state interventions. It is these hybrid institutions that need to be actively deployed within any sort of conflict management or peacebuilding strategy due to their strong local legitimacy. This argument is inevitably linked with the observation that state capacity in most parts of the world is limited. Therefore, rather than attempting to install ideal-type formal governance institutions, it may be more useful to work through these hybrid institutions. In contrast, Richmond does not provide a true account of state formation/capacity and this is a debate that is remarkably absent in his work on hybridity.

3.2 THE TOC IN RELATION TO THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

Although never explicitly stated as such, it is clear that some of the general rationales behind the ToC on 'Community-level efforts to improve local security in Mindanao' share similarities with different features of this HPO literature. This is above all the case for the space that is provided to local usages, institutions and actors in settling conflict and initiating peace. In that sense, the stance taken by TAF is one that gives a great deal of ownership and responsibility to local organisations and does not follow the 'hegemonic' and 'blueprint' characteristics of classic liberal peacebuilding and state building that is criticised by the HPO literature. Rather, this ToC should foremost be understood as a pragmatic 'hands-on' approach which supports the capacity of local actors, organisations and institutions to settle conflict and reach peace. This is founded on legitimate reservations about the capacity of formal government institutions to reach peace in the region, as these procedures are time-consuming and not always adapted to local complexities. Indirectly, this approach is therefore critical of interventions that focus only on the creation, or engineering, of formal state institutions in bringing peace to Mindanao.[114] As explained by Luckham and Kirk, the emergence of the HPO literature should above all be understood as a challenge to classic state-centric security and development

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[110] Richmond, Oliver P. and Mac Ginty, Roger (2013), op.cit., p. 763.
[111] Richmond, Oliver P. (2009) op.cit, p. 329.
[112] Richmond, Oliver P. (2009) op.cit, p. 331.
[113] Richmond, Oliver P. (2012a) op.cit, p. 123.
[114] Mid-term workshop with members CMU, Manila, 02.03.2013.

analysis,[115] and here too the ToC shares similarities with some of the most important rationales behind the literature. However, in the case of TAF, this renouncement of classic state-led development paradigms did not follow a cultural reasoning. There is no mention of the imposition of alien 'western' models of state and peace building (as is the case with Boege et al.), neither is there a systematic elaboration of the hegemonic liberal underpinnings of these interventions (as is the case with Richmond).

However, things become more complicated when studying the way in which hybridity is conceptualised and how this conceptualisation is reflected in daily programming within TAF. As we have already stated in the introduction, there is only a general elaboration on the issue of hybridity as being an interaction between formal and informal institutions. In daily parlance, evaluation and programming, this idea had limited resonance. Rather, when hybridity was referred to, the term was used to stress the importance of everything informal and non-state. It may be reassuring to note that within the HPO literature, there is no fixed definition of this concept of hybridity. In yet another article, every post-conflict society that does not follow the logics of a textbook liberal democratic state is placed under the label of 'hybrid peace'.[116] For instance, as explained above, the way that Boege et al. and Richmond approach this is significantly different. The way hybridity is understood within TAF does not follow the arguments put forward by Richmond but rather shares similarities with the work of Boege et al. The TAF ToC departs from an assessment which considers the overall socio-political environment in western Mindanao as a weak state, wherein informal institutions have a limited reach. Due to this weak state capacity, these formal institutions have interacted with resilient, indigenous institutional frameworks. As such, although this term was not actively applied among TAF personnel, the overall depiction of Mindanao comes very close to what is described as a 'hybrid political order' by Boege et al. In this hybrid political order, the state does not have a privileged position as the political framework that provides security, welfare and representation, since it has to share authority with other structures.

However, apart from pointing out some of these similarities, the most interesting exercise might be to make a critical reading of the ToC in light of the literature discussed above and some of the critiques that have been formulated on the HPO literature. For reasons of clarity, we will divide our analysis into three interrelated parts.

1. A first important critique of the HPO literature is the general and vague conceptualisations of the concept of hybridity. Agreement exists on the fact that this hybridity emerges through an interaction between everything global/international and everything indigenous/local. Clearly, this carries a wide meaning and the danger exists that this becomes a shallow and meaningless concept that can be detected everywhere. This feeling was also confirmed in different interviews as people (both people directly and indirectly linked to TAF) sometimes voiced their frustration that this hybridity 'is very big' and is therefore difficult to operationalise in specific interventions.[117] This is also a critique that can be levelled against the work of Boege et al., since it often seems that hybridity comes to stand for everything that falls outside formal state institutions and the conceptual difference between hybridity and traditional/indigenous is not always obvious. In other words, there is a fundamental question of why there is such a strong focus on these historical interactions when it seems that the authors essentially wish to point to the advantages of locally

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[115] Luckham, Robin and Kirk, Tom (2012), Security in Hybrid Political Contexts. An End-User Approach, London: Justice and Security Research Program Paper 2, p. 4

[116] Jarstad, Anna K. and Belloni, Roberto (2012), op.cit., pp. 2-3.

[117] Closing workshop with member CMU, TAF Office Manila, 29.04.2013

embedded indigenous institutions. However, within the framework of this Theory in Practice paper, the discussion is not merely conceptual/academic but also has some operational consequences. This is also an observation made by Luckham and Kirk, where - after a systematic review of the HPO literature – they state that: 'one may argue that the concept of hybridity works best as a critique of existing state-building and governance approaches, rather than offering a credible and well defined alternative to the latter'.[118] The issue that clearly emerges is what exactly is it that gives this issue of hybridity an added value? Why exactly hybridity and not ownership? Why exactly hybridity rather than social embeddedness or legitimacy? Why exactly hybridity and not agency? From our analysis in Lanao del Sur and North Cotabato,[119] the two most important advantages ascribed to this specific strategy of conflict management are: (a) a pragmatic - yet highly defendable - cost-efficiency argument stating that even if the institutional environment in which one is operating is not perfect, one should work with whatever actors, organisations or institutions are present in order to solve disputes quickly, rather than attempting to install an ideal institutional environment; and (b) by working with these local institutions, actors and organisations the interventions obtain a certain embeddedness and a sense of ownership exists that would be impossible to reach if one worked only through formal government institutions. This is already evident through the specific symbols and rituals (e.g. blood money, kanduli, religious symbols) that are being deployed. Moreover, the conflicting parties have a great say over the actual sequence of events, the content of the reconciliation process, and how this should be achieved. This sense of ownership, which is closely linked to a great deal of flexibility, is persistently mentioned as a substantial added value. The issue of hybridity can be considered as secondary when compared to these two points.

2. A possible way out of this conceptual vagueness may be to disaggregate between different levels of hybridity. A recent article by Millar in the Journal of Peace Research suggested making a distinction between an institutional, practical, ritual and conceptual level of hybridity.[120] The author suggests making this distinction since, in his view, not every scale of hybridity is amenable to the type of purposeful planning that international organisations want to pursue. Institutional hybridity is hereby approached as the deliberate creation of new institutions by international organisations. The example given is that of the Special Court for Sierra Leone being a truly hybrid criminal court. Hybridity at the practical level is something that is (dis)incentivised by international actors. In other words, there is no deliberate engineering of new hybrid institutions but certain existing practices (e.g. the payment of blood money) are actively supported. Ritual hybridity is defined in Millar's article as 'the mixing of symbol and ceremony to form new ritual forms or the appropriation or deployment of existing ritual for new purposes.' This differs from practical hybridity since practical hybridity primarily concerns 'everyday actions resulting from the choices agents make'. Finally, conceptual hybridity concerns 'the mixing and melding of ideas and beliefs about the world in the minds of individuals' and is a type of hybridity over which international organisations do not have control. Clearly, the differing scales that are being used here depend on the level of social engineering, planning and predictability that goes with it. Following this hierarchy, it is clear that the TAF conflict management interventions come close to what is considered as practical hybridity, since a deliberate choice is made to support certain practices. This implies that these interventions cannot be put under the label of 'institutional hybridity' as there is no purposeful creation of new and truly sustainable institutions, although the

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[118] Luckham, Robin and Kirk, Tom (2012), op.cit, p. 14
[119] Adam, Jeroen; Verbrugge, Boris and vanden Boer Dorien (2014a), op.cit.
[120] Millar, Gearoid (2014), op.cit., p. 504-506.

ToC itself speaks about hybridity at the level of actual institutions. Next, as is clear from our empirical data, the type of hybridity that is being reached is more of a situational, ad-hoc type rather than having a truly institutionalised nature. What one most often witnessed was that a formal institutional forum acted as a venue for a diversity of practices that could be put under the heading of 'informal reconciliation'. Furthermore, this practical hybridity is primarily actor-oriented as this concerns the 'everyday choices' of local individuals about 'how to perform peacebuilding functions'.[121] Indirectly, this was also admitted by TAF staff when they stated that their conflict management strategy is first and foremost dependent on the involvement of credible mediators (local champions).[122] In other words, the approach deployed by TAF is more of an actor-oriented approach than a truly institutional approach. In that sense, the basic rationale underlying these conflict management interventions comes remarkably close to what is being called a 'coalitional ToC' in other TAF programmes.[123] Although the objectives within these Coalitions for Change programmes are different from the settlement of violent disputes, the specific strategy for reaching these objectives through 'relationships with various coalitions and networks' hereby 'establishing an environment of constructive engagement between civil society/reform actors and government' is remarkably similar. To a certain extent, it might even be argued that this coalitional ToC comes closer to the specific strategies TAF is deploying in their conflict management interventions when compared to the hybrid institutional ToC.

3. In their review of the HPO literature, Luckham and Kirk notice a remarkable absence of questions about power. As they argue: 'Whilst new approaches to human and citizen security have challenged the state-centric bias of previous security thinking, they still tend to overlook security's relationships to political power, including its deeply contested nature in hybrid political orders'.[124] As we have elaborated above, the provision of security is a pivotal asset in the build-up of political authority. This implies that an analysis of conflict management interventions always needs to be contextual by taking into account broader power structures and how the interventions relate to these broader power structures. We would stress that TAF is aware of the politicised nature of their conflict management interventions, in the sense that there is a strong awareness that for a successful settlement of disputes a certain political capital is inevitable. It is also admitted that this political capital is found particularly among local elites. However, in their paper, Luckham and Kirk do not necessarily wish to tackle the rather pragmatic question of how certain elite constellations can be successfully deployed for the settlement of disputes. Rather, they particularly wish to push a broader research agenda where these elite coalitions and their specific interventions would be studied within a broader socio-political field. This includes some straightforward empirical questions such as: who is included/excluded in these arrangements; how far do these arrangements challenge or reinforce exclusivist political orders; and who exactly are the people providing security. It has not been possible to deal systematically with all of these questions within this paper. However, two important remarks need to be made. Firstly, as we have extensively elaborated in Sections 1 and 2, the extent to which the political capital necessary for successful conflict management is situated in a traditional/informal field might be overrated. Rather, this political capital is primarily situated in elected office, considering the control over coercive means and patronage by the local executive. This observation inevitably leads to a second point. This is the question of how these interventions, and the specific elite coalitions behind them, should be analysed within a socio-political field which is marked by its highly

[121] Millar, Gearoid (2014), op.cit., p. 505.
[122] Mid-term workshop with members CMU, TAF Office Manila, 2.03.2013.
[123] Excerpts from the Joint Management Review Document (of September 2013), TAF unpublished documents
[124] Luckham, Robin and Kirk, Tom (2012), op.cit, p. 4.

authoritarian and coercive features, despite the formal existence of an electoral democracy. For instance, the German Africanist Andreas Mehler explicitly states that the hybrid solutions suggested by Boege et al. 'are in danger of bringing on more of the same – neo-patrimonial instability and inefficiency'.[125] In other words, what Mehler puts forward is that a choice of the traditional, the local, or the hybrid for that matter, cannot be separated from questions about the highly illiberal characteristics of some of these institutions. This is also admitted by Richmond himself when he states that: '… local actors and contexts can be partisan, discriminatory, exclusive and violent (as can international actors). Local contexts also contain power relations and hierarchies that favour some above others (as do international frameworks).'[126] These questions are reminiscent of a related debate about the support provided to indigenous institutions of resource management by a whole range of international organisations. Despite a range of 'positive characteristics' in such indigenous institutions, different authors have also pointed to their highly exclusivist features and their vulnerability to elite capture.[127] Against the background of the elite-based and violent socio-political context wherein TAF is intervening in Mindanao, this puts forward some inevitable political and even ideological questions that will remain at the core of any intervention in the region. Is there a line to be drawn in working with elite coalitions with some highly illiberal and authoritarian credentials? How far are practices of patronage enforced by indirectly supporting the practice of blood money? These questions do not necessarily need a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' answer and will always depend on careful judgment and attention to the specific context. What is more fundamental, however, is that these questions point to a deeper underlying issue. This is the fact that the balance and interaction between pragmatic conflict management interventions focusing on the quick settlement of violent disputes on the one hand and governance programmes aimed at the long-term reinforcement of impersonal institutions on the other hand, needs a deeper and more systematic elaboration.

3.3 CONCLUSION

In this third section, we have related our empirical findings, and the rationales behind the ToC on conflict management, to the broader HPO literature. We hereby illustrated how different characteristics of this ToC follow the broader arguments provided by the HPO literature. This is particularly the case through the focus on local agency, cultural practices and indigenous institutions within peacebuilding and the (explicit and implicit) refusal to promote classic state-led governance programmes attempting to install efficient and impersonal institutions.

On the other hand, it is also clear that some critical remarks about the ToC can be put forward, based on some of the pertinent critiques formulated in the HPO literature. In particular, we have focused on three interrelated issues:

1) The ToC would benefit from a more systematic reflection about where the added value of the hybridity concept lies in daily programming. It seems that hybridity and tradition/informality are often

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[125] Mehler, Andreas (2009), Hybrid Regimes and Oligopolies of Violence in Africa: Expectations on Security Provision "From Below", in: Martina Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle (eds.) *Building Peace in the Absence of States: Challenging the Discourse of State Failure*, Berghof: Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series, pp. 57-67 (accessible at www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Dialogues/dialogue8_failingstates_complete.pdf)
[126] Richmond, Oliver P. and Mac Ginty, Roger, op.cit., p. 770.
[127] Peters, Pauline E. (2004) Inequality and Social Conflict over Land in Africa, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 4 (3): 269-314; Adam, J. (2010) Post-Conflict Ambon: Forced Migration and the Ethno-Territorial Effects of Customary Tenure, *Development and Change*, 41 (3): 401-421.

used interchangeably and the specific added values that are being ascribed to this hybridity can often be detected in the broader field of tradition/informality. This puts forward the question: why hybridity and not ownership, flexibility, or embededdness?

2) We have suggested thinking about the scale of hybridity that is being reached through these interventions. Based on the literature, we have suggested that the interaction between the formal and the informal should be conceptualised as a practical hybridity, due to its ad-hoc nature, actor-oriented perspective and the fact that the type of programming is above all about the (dis)incentivising of certain existing practices, rather than the creation of new institutions. Based on this observation it was then suggested to elaborate more systematically how this ToC on hybrid conflict managements relates to other 'coalitional' ToC's that have been used for other types of programming and interventions by TAF.

3) We have suggested accounting more directly for the place of politics and power within these interventions. Based on our empirical assessment in Lanao del Sur, it is clear that the environment in which TAF is intervening is characterised by some highly authoritarian and coercive characteristics. In this socio-political environment, the local executive is the key player, rather than traditional or other informal authorities. Inevitably, when conducting conflict management interventions in this region, one needs a certain degree of pragmatism. Partly, this pragmatism towards 'the local' is the ultimate feature of the hybrid approach TAF is proposing here. However, the ToC itself would greatly benefit from a more systematic elaboration about the relationship between these conflict management and governance programmes aimed at the long-term reinforcement of impersonal institutions.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This paper offers an analysis of a particular set of conflict management interventions by The Asia Foundation in the province of Lanao del Sur, Mindanao. These interventions were funded by DFID through a PPA, for which a specific ToC was written down. With this paper, we did not have the intention of providing a systematic assessment of the efficacy or sustainability of these interventions. Rather, we have elaborated on some of the major conceptual underpinnings of this ToC in relation to the usage of the concept of hybridity. This has been done through an analysis of relevant policy documents and a fieldwork visit to the province of Lanao del Sur in autumn 2013.

Overall, it has been demonstrated how a framing of Lanao del Sur, and Muslim Mindanao more generally, as consisting of weak state institutions and strong informal institutions, is the guiding rationale behind the formulation of this ToC. Our fieldwork data indicate that this should be nuanced. As has been consistently demonstrated throughout this paper, the state remains a key player in the field of conflict management. First of all, this is evident in the pivotal role played by politicians in settling disputes through their control over different types of coercive organisations and their access to financial resources. These two assets are crucial, not only for the successful conclusion of disputes, but in the establishment of political authority in the community in general. It is against the backdrop of this observation that the place of traditional authority needs to be understood. Tradition as such largely remains an empty box when it comes to conflict management. It is only when traditional leaders manage to combine the symbolic capital associated with traditional leadership with the financial and coercive resources associated with modern statehood that they manage to play an important role in conflict management. The omnipotence of the state in this particular field of governance can also be discerned by an analysis of the specific institutional mechanisms through which conflicts are settled. As illustrated, the hybrid nature of conflict management institutions needs to be understood as one wherein formal state institutions come to serve as avenues for informal practices of mediation and amicable settlement. The clearest example of this hybrid interaction can be detected in the fact that the tradition of paying blood money to compensate for harm inflicted has become the prime way of settling disputes in formal institutions such as the municipal Peace and Order Councils/Committee. Importantly, this Council/Committee is dominated by the local executive, thereby further confirming his control over the manner in which disputes are settled in the community.

Thus, the claim that TAF is working with a specific set of hybrid conflict management institutions can be confirmed. However, through a critical engagement with some of the academic Hybrid Political Order literature, it has also been put forward that the added value of this hybrid approach could be sharpened. Very much in line with major publications within this literature, an obvious and convincing argument is being made as to why working through informal practices of dispute settlement has some clear advantages. As our fieldwork data also indicate, these practices have a strong local embeddedness, and are considered as being accessible and flexible when compared to formal punitive justice. However, the shift from this observation towards an explicit and strong argument for working with hybrid institutions is generally lacking. In order to establish this argument, which could serve as the overall conceptual underpinning of this specific ToC, two broad issues need to be tackled. First, there is a need for a much stronger elaboration on the role that should be played by the state both in the immediate and long-term future in Muslim Mindanao. Obviously, the answers to this question will depend very much on the outcomes of the current negotiations between the MILF and the Philippine government. Secondly, this also requires a major rethinking of how these conflict

management interventions relate to other more classic governance programmes aimed at the establishment of efficient and impersonal governance institutions.

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