

Preface

Asking why this book was written inevitably touches upon my life experience. Everything started when I was a child and it ends with the aspirations I have for a country that I left more than a decade ago. Very often I ask myself why I accepted such a huge challenge. Why should I look behind when looking forward promises more fulfillment? But I feel that there is no way I can move forward when one question remains unanswered - the question of "why".

This book seeks to answer a question I formulated when I was made to witness how human lives can be so cheap to certain people on the other side of the divide. This book does not seek to allocate blame, nor does it offer absolution for things that went wrong in the past. Ultimately, it is not the political that is at fault, but an incapacity of breaking the chain of violence. It is not our religion or ethnicity that brings pain, destruction, and anguish, but bigotry and a lack of compassion. It is violence that destroys the future of a whole nation.

My search started the night it was proven in front of an eight-year old boy that humans can be blinded by hatred and by narratives without thinking beyond what is told to them. Questions led to a yearning for knowledge and as the child grew up, he was no longer satisfied by simply posing questions. Now, he wants answers. This book originated from my PhD studies at the University of Vienna, under the supervision of Prof. Hannelore Kreisky and Prof. Ottmar Höll. At the beginning of my studies, it was highly contentious as to whether it was actually possible for someone in my position to write scientific or academic papers on issues that have personally affected me. My personal attachment to the issues may undermine my objectivity as a researcher. However, I believe that it isn't impossible to write on issues of violence and agony without becoming emotionally affected, regardless of personal involvement. As such, my personal attachment may provide additional insights and aid comprehension of the problem and its context.

Throughout my PhD studies, I had the privilege of meeting other scholars and peace activists who, like me, were looking for ways to end violence in the Philippines. Surprisingly, although the academic landscape in the country is not always conducive to rigorous discourse, dialogues among researchers still take place, although there are several lost opportunities that could have been exploited if the environment for researchers was different. In the later stages of my PhD studies, while being part of the Processes of International Negotiations (PIN) Program

(now housed in Clingendael, the Hague) I was frequently invited into discussions with government negotiation panel members, and to suggest how impasses could be broken. The former head of the government negotiation panel, Undersecretary Rafael Seguis, was aware of how easily the negotiation process experiences impasses due to minor issues. Our personal talks influenced the focus of my research project by identifying various stumbling blocks that make the negotiation process intractable. This is the main purpose of this project. Looking from a negotiation (systems) analytical perspective, complemented by rudiments of the Viennese Critical School, I have looked for existing approaches that could be re-developed to support measures in the peace negotiation process. For example, it was highly inspiring the use the thoughts of Hannah Arendt, Otto Bauer and Karl Renner to understand the nation-building process in the Philippines.

Although the peace process seems a volatile one, several breakthroughs have been achieved. This gives me cause for optimism. Nevertheless, the biggest challenge for the peace process in the Philippines is how to prevent the indifference of Philippine society to the mediation process, and their resignation to the inevitability of violence. This project aims to make each Filipino understand that the Philippine nation can only be as strong as its weakest member.

<http://www.springer.com/978-3-658-05214-0>

Nation-building and Identity Conflicts
Facilitating the Mediation Process in Southern
Philippines

Hernández, A.

2014, XVIII, 244 p. 4 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-658-05214-0