

■ URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Between the Land and Sea

Policy Implications of the Davao City
Coastal Road to Fishing Communities

Ryan C. Songcayauon and Raymundo R. Pavo



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"Fishing boats in Barangay Matina Aplaya at the mouth of the Matina River, with the 660-meter long bridge - part of the Davao City Coastal Road - in the background."

Photo by: Anna Mae Dalugdog, Senior Research Assistant

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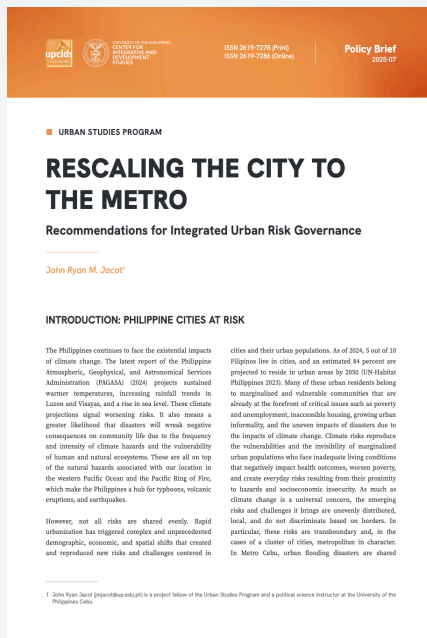
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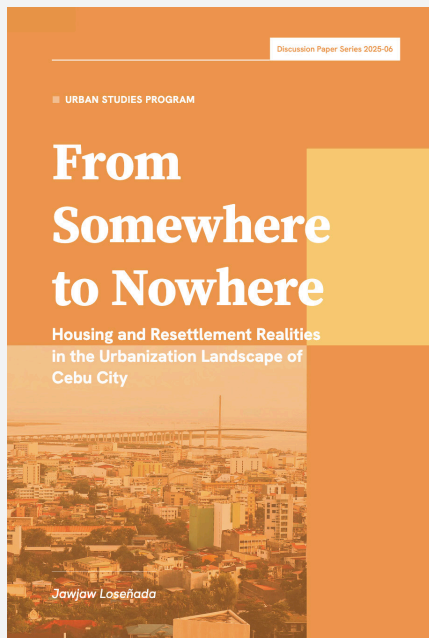
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BETWEEN THE LAND AND SEA

Policy Implications of the Davao City
Coastal Road to Fishing Communities

Ryan C. Songcayauon and Raymundo R. Pavo

ABSTRACT

The Philippine government has regularly developed socioeconomic plans to direct the nation's progress through the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) and the National Priority Plan (NPP) (NEDA 2021). With the rollout of the Build! Build! Build! Program of the Duterte administration, most of the regions outside of Luzon have fortunately benefited from the infrastructure flagship projects such as roads and bridges. Unfortunately, some of these projects directly impacted vulnerable communities during and after implementation. This paper particularly explores the impacts of the construction of the Davao City Coastal Road on the vulnerable fishing communities along the shores of Davao Gulf where this road traversed. This paper presented the planning and implementation of flagship projects of the government to better appreciate the rationale of proposing the said coastal road project. By conducting surveys of the selected affected communities, namely Barangay Talomo, Barangay Matina Aplaya, and 23-C (Isla Verde); focus group discussions; key informant interviews; and a forum, this paper captured the impacts of the said project. These became the references to propose numerous policy recommendations to assist, alleviate, or lessen the impact and influence of building big projects such as the dikes and the coastal road in Davao City among the three barangays. These recommendations highlight the importance of community participation in planning and development, history and placemaking in these communities, and the communities as essential spatial aspects of the urban fabric. Moreover, these recommendations could become a reference for future big projects in the country.

Keywords: Davao City Coastal Road, fishing communities, urbanization

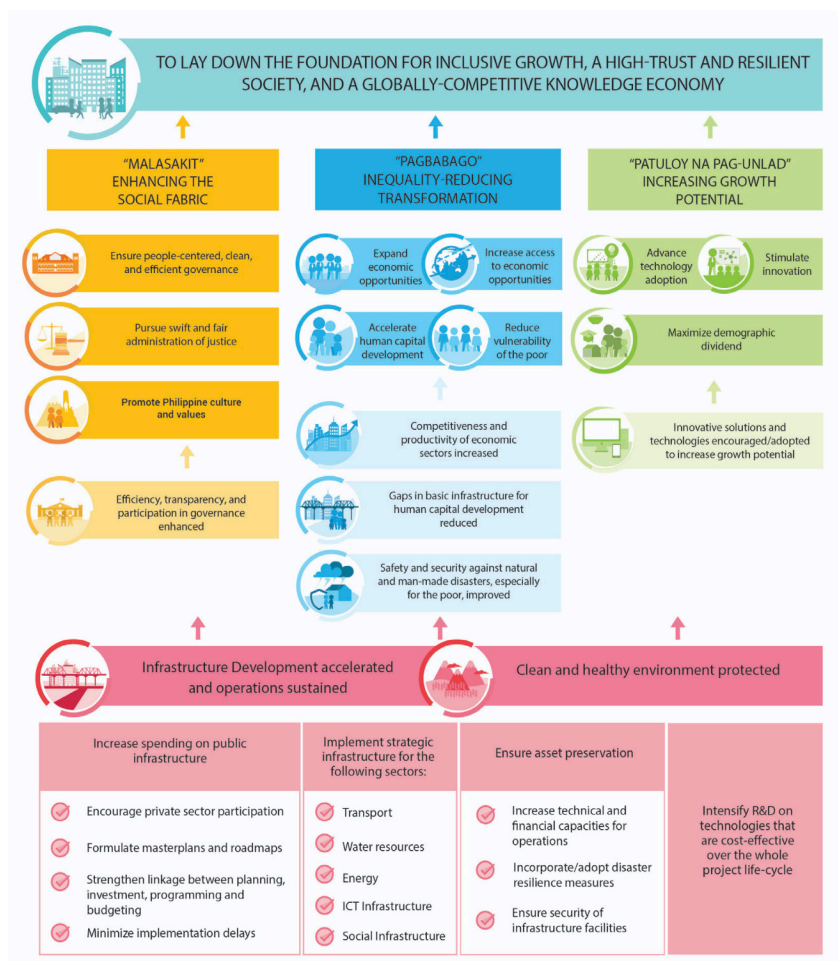
INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II, the Philippine government has regularly developed socioeconomic plans to steer the nation's progress. These plans have adapted over time to meet the country's evolving needs and priorities, integrating visions of development, objectives, strategies, and tools for effective execution (Jurado 2003). The Philippine government follows a systematic method for project planning and development with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) serving as the main guide. The PDP is an all-encompassing framework that details the nation's socioeconomic policies, strategies, and programs over a six-year timeframe. Furthermore, the National Priority Plan (NPP), which the government maintains in addition to the PDP, identifies priority projects and initiatives in a number of areas, including economic development, science and culture, human settlements, youth and sports development, education, and health. The overall goal of the government's project planning and development initiatives is to make the Philippines more inventive, inclusive, and competitive internationally. In this paper, we will refer to the PDP 2017–2022 under the administration of former President Rodrigo Duterte specifically on infrastructure development (NEDA 2021). This paper would also refer to the Build! Build! Build! program of the Duterte administration, which saw the aggressive implementation of infrastructure projects to bring the “Golden Age of Infrastructure” in the Philippines during his term. These include the Davao City Coastal Road project.

At the onset of each president's administration, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) directs and organizes the consultative process and preparation of a new medium-term PDP that serves as the government's guide in development planning for the next six years. Under Duterte's PDP, the need for accelerating the development of infrastructure was highlighted, considering its importance in supporting the three pillars and intermediate goals of the PDP (see figure 1). The PDP is guided by *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, which embodies the shared dreams of Filipinos to enjoy a “*matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay*” (stable, comfortable, and secure life). By increasing the spending on public infrastructure, implementing strategic infrastructure, ensuring asset preservation, and intensifying research and development (R&D) on technologies, the three goals—“*malasakit*” (enhancing the social fabric), “*pagbabago*” (inequality-reducing transformation), and “*patuloy na pag-unlad*” (increasing growth potential)—will be achieved. It therefore supports the

overall goal of inclusive growth, high-trust and resilient society, and globally competitive knowledge economy. This planned acceleration on infrastructure development was made into reality with Duterte's Build! Build! Build! program which seeks to accelerate infrastructure expenditure from an average 2.9 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Aquino administration to around 7.3 percent during Duterte's and cost around ₱9 trillion. The program includes flagship infrastructure on rail transportation, urban transportation, and roads (including bridges and expressways), among others. The Davao City Coastal Road was included in these lists of projects under the "Build, Build, Build" program. The first phase of the coastal road opened on 1 July 2023, and it is planned to be completed by 2026 (Banzon 2023; Davao City 2023). The coastal road project is one of the three initiatives under the DPWH's Mindanao Standard Highway Network (Banzon 2018) as part of the bigger Philippine Spine Expressway Network. The other two components include the Luzon Spine Expressway Network and the Visayas Spine Expressway Network which is envisioned as interconnected expressways on the islands of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

This paper will be guided by the following inquiries that would help inform the policy recommendations and gaps: What are the impacts of displacement due to the coastal road construction on the livelihoods and well-being of the fishing communities? What practices can be implemented to mitigate the negative impacts of the project on these communities? This paper aims to investigate how big-ticket projects of the government such as the Davao City Coastal Road project are implemented and affect the vulnerable urban communities of the city, in this case, the fishing communities of Davao City in the coastal areas traversed by the coastal road as a case study. With a review of project development processes and implementation of government projects, a better appreciation of these types of projects will be acquired. In the end, this paper hopes to recommend ways in order to have a more inclusive and sustainable project planning and implementation.



■ **Figure 1.** Strategic Framework to Accelerate Infrastructure Development (PDP 2017–2022).

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines, a developing nation, implemented regional development planning to address uneven development across its regions. This initiative began in the early 1960s with the creation of several regional development authorities. However, it was not until 1973 that regional development planning was initiated in eleven of the country's then thirteen regions. The approach

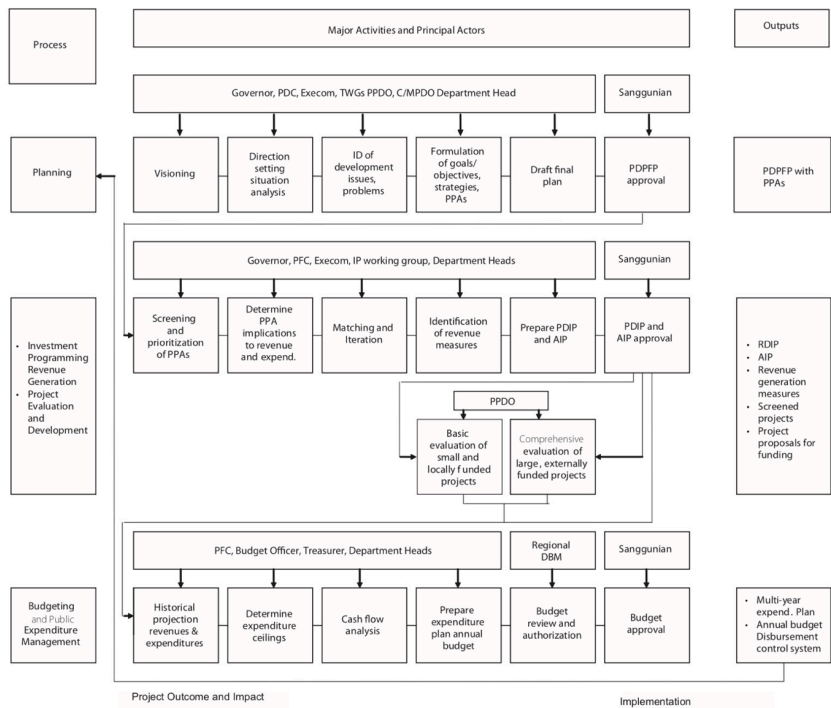
taken by the Philippines largely mirrors conventional methods. This method includes the following steps: (1) analysis of existing conditions, (2) objective and target setting, (3) strategy and policy formulation, (4) identification of programs and projects, (5) resource requirement evaluation, and (6) phasing and implementation. Notably, investment programming involves identifying priority projects, conducting feasibility analyses, and implementing these projects as part of the regional planning framework (Prantilla, 2014).

The regional planning process in the Philippines begins with setting national and regional development goals, which represent the long-term aspirations of society and are influenced by societal values and the country's Constitution. Unlike objectives, goals reflect broader societal ambitions. Objectives are formulated after completing steps such as environmental analysis, resource analysis, value/aspiration analysis, problem and opportunity profiling, and capability profiling. These steps focus on analyzing current conditions, identifying problems, and identifying opportunities. The regional development strategies then outline both the objectives and the methods chosen to address the identified issues or capitalize on the opportunities (Prantilla 2014).

In the Philippines, regional development planning is overseen by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), which serves as the government's central planning agency. NEDA is responsible for creating both short-term and long-term national development plans, as well as identifying issues and formulating policies for the country's development. The NEDA Board, chaired by the President of the Philippines and comprising secretaries from various executive departments and other officials, ensures a connection between plan formulation and implementation. Supporting the NEDA Board is a technical staff led by the Director General, who also serves as the Secretary of Economic Planning. The regional planning organization mirrors the national structure. Each region has a Regional Development Council (RDC) similar in composition to the NEDA Board. The RDC is led by a Chair and is supported by a technical staff/secretariat made up of personnel from the NEDA Regional Office.

The NEDA has been providing technical aid to local and provincial governments in planning and project development as their action to the mandate to coordinate development plans and investment plans in the Philippines. With this, they have developed the Guidelines on Provincial/Local Planning and Expenditure

Management. The guidelines include: (1) Integrated Framework; (2) Provincial Development and Physical Framework Plan; (3) Investment Programming and Revenue Generation; (4) Tools and Techniques on Budgeting and Expenditure Management; and (5) Project Evaluation and Development. The main actions covered by the guidelines, their general order, relationships, and results, as well as the main players engaged, are depicted in figure 2.



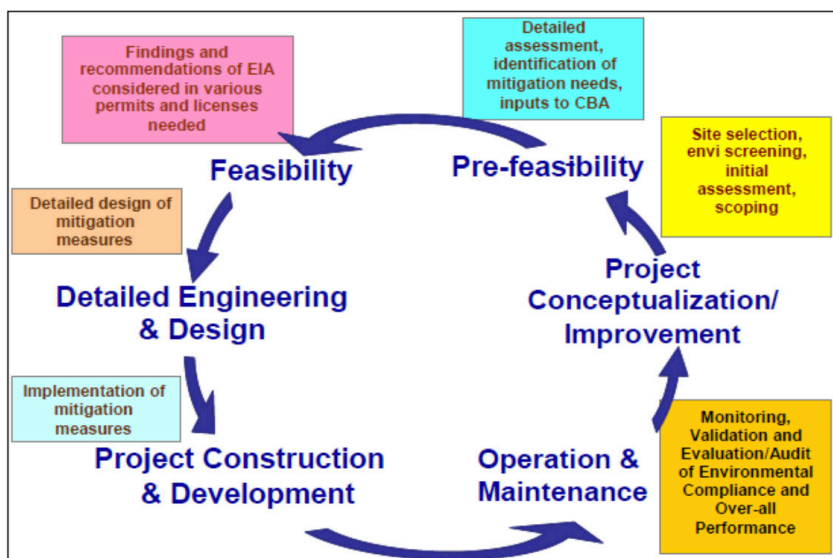
■ **Figure 2.** Schedule of Processes and Activities for Provincial/Local Planning and Expenditure Management.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CYCLE OF DPWH

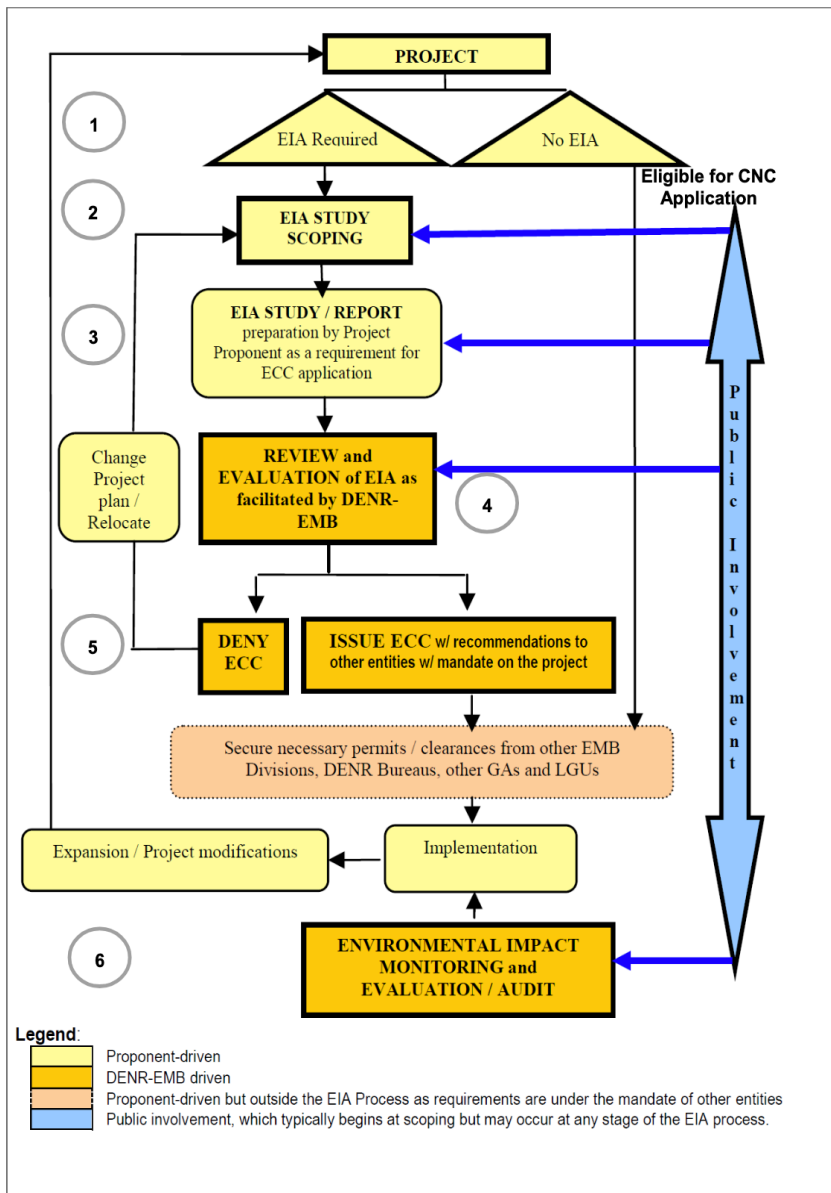
The development of infrastructure projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH, n.d.) such as roads, bridges, flood control, and water supply, is guided by a cycle process consisting of four phases (www.dpwh.gov.ph):

1. Project Identification
2. Project Preparation
3. Project Implementation
4. Project Operation and Evaluation

Project identification involves the process of naming potential projects including their return on investments. Project preparation involves five activities: project feasibility study, inclusion in the medium-term infrastructure program, fund appropriation, detailed engineering, and inclusion in the annual infrastructure program. Meanwhile, project implementation involves six activities: fund releases, right-of-way acquisition, bidding and contracting, construction, completion and acceptance, and payment. And lastly, the project operation and evaluation includes operational and maintenance, and impact evaluation. The figure below presents the project cycle where the EIA is also situated. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), is defined by DAO 2003-30 as a process of analyzing and forecasting the potential environmental effects of a project during its development, commissioning, operation, and abandonment. In order to safeguard the environment and the welfare of the community, the EIA also entails creating suitable preventative, mitigation, and enhancing methods to address these effects.



■ **Figure 3.** EIA Process within the Project Cycle.



■ **Figure 4.** Flowchart of the EIA Process.

The EIA puts value in public involvement in proposed projects needing an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) whether by private entities or the DPWH. In fact, public involvement is included in the EIA process in four major components of the process but may also happen at any stage of the

process as shown in figure 4 above. A significant part of project planning is public involvement and participation which determines the socioeconomic circumstances of the people living in and around the project areas and identifies the impacts, risks, and mitigation strategies, as well as the opportunities and advantages. It is also a crucial aspect of the DPWH performance requirement as stated in their social and environmental management systems operation manual. These consultations “are based on inclusive and culturally appropriate processes to effectively engage and facilitate inclusion of impacted groups”, as reflected in the said operations manual. However, with the unavailability of the EIA report specifically for the Davao City Coastal Road Project, we cannot review the scope of public involvement in the preparation of the project. What we can interrogate is, who are the public involved? Are the affected communities, especially the fisherfolk, extensively consulted? What were the measures agreed upon to consider their life and livelihood along the coast of Davao City?

BUILD! BUILD! BUILD!

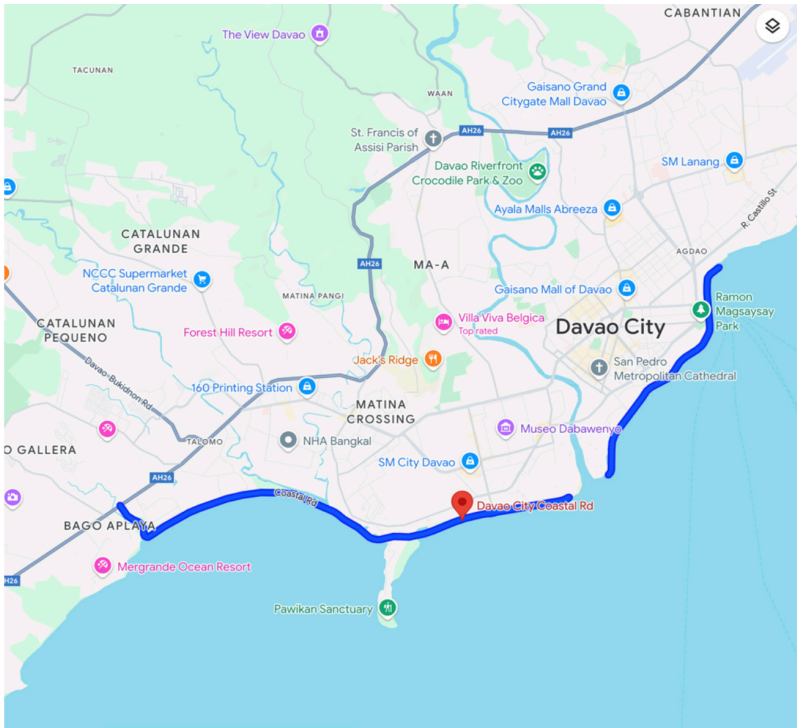
Inadequate infrastructure has often been identified as the major weakness hindering the country’s economic development. The Build! Build! Build! Program is the flagship initiative of the Duterte administration, designed to bring about a “Golden Age of Infrastructure” in the Philippines and open the floodgates towards economic development. According to DPWH data, the Build! Build! Build! projects created 6.5 million jobs for Filipinos between 2016 and 2020. This addressed the country’s unemployment which is mostly associated with but is not limited to construction and development. During the Duterte administration, a total of 40,080 kilometers of roads were constructed, maintained, widened, upgraded, and rehabilitated. This includes 3,101 kilometers of tourism roads, 999 kilometers of roads leading to industries and trade corridors, 573 kilometers of access roads to seaports, airports, and railway stations to boost logistics and economic activities, and 2,712 kilometers of farm-to-market roads. A total of 6,854 bridges were constructed, widened, upgraded, rehabilitated, and strengthened with the Build! Build! Build! Program.

Mindanao has been a major recipient of the Build! Build! Build! Program of the Duterte Administration amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Quiros 2020). During the 29th Mindanao Business Conference streamed online in 2020, then-Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez said, “Mindanao is at the front and center of the “Build, Build, Build” infrastructure program. The Department of Finance

has been able to secure financing for some infrastructure and peace-building projects in the region even amidst the pandemic.” Many of the projects were proposed in Davao City, such as the Davao City Bypass Road project—a 45.5-kilometer four-lane road that would cut travel time from an hour and 44 minutes to only about 49 minutes from the southern part of the city to the adjacent city of Panabo. This bypass road also includes a 2.3-kilometer tunnel that will reduce travel time from the usual 44 minutes to just five minutes. Aside from the Bypass Road project, another equally big project is the ₱26-billion Davao City Coastal Road, which is expected to alleviate traffic congestion in the downtown area of the city. Dominguez stated that the two major infrastructure projects are integral to the Duterte administration’s efforts to establish Davao City as a hub for agriculture and industry.

THE DAVAO CITY COASTAL ROAD

The Davao City Coastal Road (DCCR) project, in a way, went through the process of the infrastructure development cycle under the DPWH as evident in the activities conducted before and during the construction of the DCCR. On 27 April 2018, then-City Mayor Sara Z. Duterte signed Executive Order No. 10, series of 2018, titled “An Order Creating the Davao City Coastal Road Project Advisory and Monitoring Body.” The Body is basically “tasked to review, assess, evaluate, and monitor the plans, programs, as well as the implementation of the DPWH Coastal Road Project in Davao City.” In the second quarter of 2018, the Regional Development Council Region XI (RDC XI), through its Resolution No. 61, directed the DPWH XI to submit the project’s feasibility study, environmental compliance certificate, and resettlement action plan for the entire 18.20 km of the DCCR (RDC XI Communicator 2Q, 2018). On 2 March of the same year, the project was suspended due to road right-of-way issues with the 208 affected households and other properties. The Regional Project Monitoring Committee XI (RPMC XI) recommended that DPWH XI should quickly resolve the issue to avoid delays in the implementation. In 2022, the overall physical accomplishment of the DCCR’s 2017-2021 contract packages is 82.18% completed. The request from fisherfolk to provide a breakwater in the Talomo-Matina Bridge was granted by DPWH XI (RDC XI Communicator 1Q, 2022). Above all these, the DPWH claimed to have conducted a series of *pulong-pulong* or meetings with the affected communities before the construction of the coastal area even started.



■ **Figure 5.** The Davao City Coastal Road Spanning 17.33 km (www.davaocity.gov.ph, 2023).

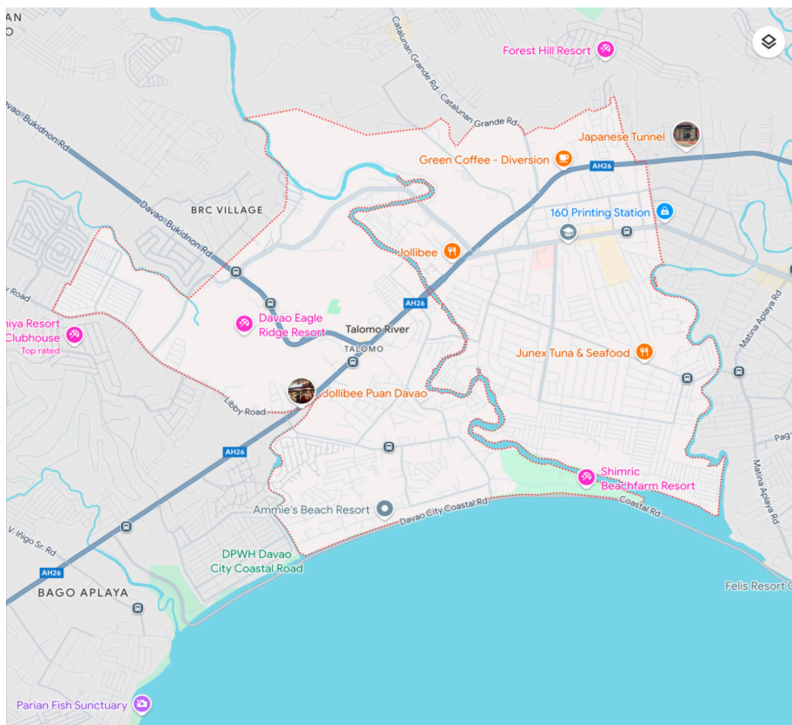
As of this writing, the first phase of the coastal road has been opened that spans 7.5 kilometers from Bago Aplaya to Tulip Drive. This is composed of Segment A: Bago Aplaya to Matina Aplaya and part of Segment B: Matina Aplaya to Roxas Avenue. A key component of the coastal road, the Bucana Bridge, is currently being completed and is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. This bridge, crossing the mouth of the Davao River, will totally connect all four segments of the coastal road.

FISHING COMMUNITIES ALONG THE DAVAO CITY COASTAL ROAD

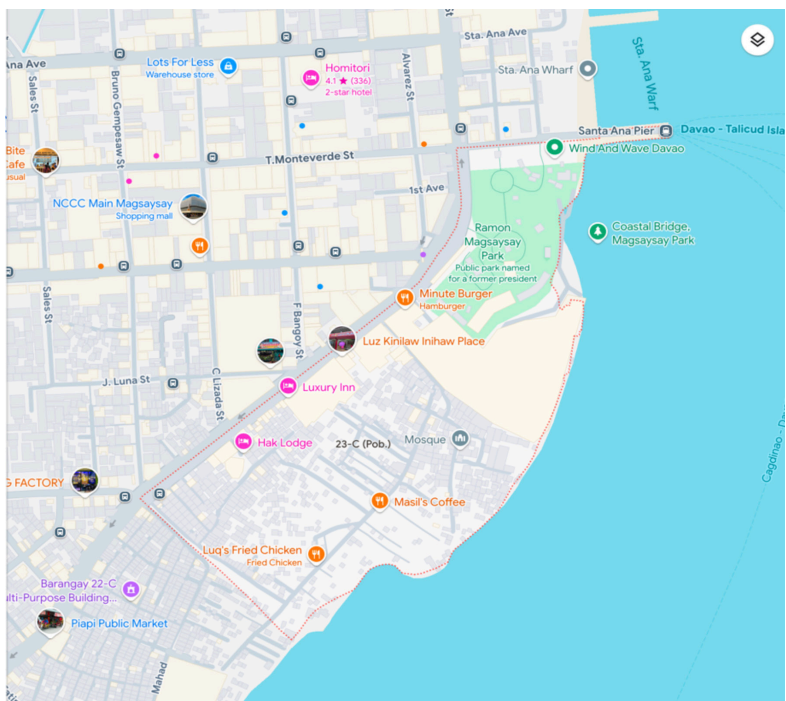
We conducted a thorough study, particularly with the fisherfolk along the coastal areas of Davao City. As one of the vulnerable groups and communities affected by the DCCR project, we aim to investigate how big-ticket projects of the government such as the DCCR are implemented and affect these vulnerable urban communities. By contextualizing and appraising the effects of the changes caused by the project, a better understanding is constructed

that could aid implementers of projects such as the DCCR on how to better handle and comprehensively implement what is expected in the project development process and the infrastructure development cycle set by NEDA and the DPWH. We should also try to reframe that these fishing communities are also contributors to the economic and social activities of urbanization specifically in the emerging peri-urban spaces as natural off-shoots of the archipelagic setup of the country (Manejar 2022).

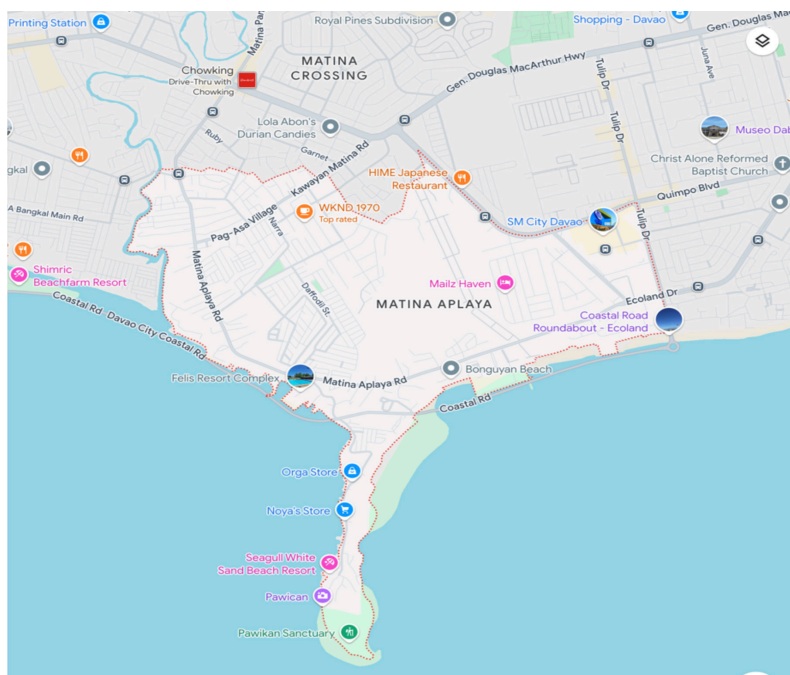
The study surveyed at least 30 households in three barangays of Davao City: Talomo, Matina Aplaya, and 23-C (Isla Verde). These households's main livelihood has been fishing for the past 10 years. This helps in better understanding their activities before the construction of the coastal road. Fifteen males and fifteen females were surveyed to identify details related to their fishing livelihood, years in fishing, and other details such as the kinds of fish caught and how much of these they sell or consume. Ten FGD participants were invited to express their narratives on the displacements that happened and the resilience they adopted.



■ **Figure 6.** Barangay Talomo, Davao City



■ Figure 7. Barangay 23-C (Isla Verde), Davao City



■ Figure 8. Barangay Matina Aplaya, Davao City

As stated in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report for the Davao City Expressway:

Davao City has 26 coastal barangays with a total coastline of 60.1 km. The coastal communities have a total population of 302,699 persons consisting of 56,749 households. The coastal barangays have 6,253 registered fisherfolk as of November 2019 according to the City Agriculture Office (2019). Data shows that only one barangay (Daliao) is fully dependent on fishing as their main source of livelihood while eight coastal barangays have 25-50% dependency on fishing. Less than 25% of households in 15 coastal barangays depend on fishing as their main source of income. A total of 50%-75% of households in Barangays Talomo and Lizada are dependent on fishing for their livelihood (CCCC Highway Consultants Co., Ltd. & CCCC-AECOM Eco-Environmental Co., Ltd., 2022, 148).

As of this writing, the portion of the DCCR where barangays Talomo and Matina Aplaya are located is already open to the public and that along 23-C (Isla Verde) is yet to open.

Results of the study showed that there is a need for docking areas or facilities and passageways for the fishing boats. This is noticeably clear in the case of 23-C (Isla Verde) where access to the sea is totally blocked by the coastal road and the temporary road constructed at the back of Magsaysay Park for the delivery of construction materials used in the project and some houses which are already attached to the coastal road (see figure 9).



■ **Figure 9.** Fishing community in 23-C (Isla Verde) showing the existing setup.

The figure above also shows the temporary makeshift docking platform made from bamboo flooring and barrels as a floatation device built by the fisherfolk anchored far away from the shore. This is to ensure that the boats will be safe in cases when big waves hit the sides of the coastal road or during inclement weather conditions. In the case of Matina Aplaya, access is blocked by the dike built along the river which originally served as the fisherfolk's docking and access area (see figure 6). In Talomo, shorelines that shift their contours depending on the tides now serve as the community's docking area. But still, the dikes that separated them from the shore hindered the ease of access to the sea (see figure 7). The cases of Matina Aplaya and Talomo are far more favorable compared to 23-C (Isla Verde) where the coastal road directly blocked access to the sea since the construction is on-grade while that in Talomo and Matina Aplaya is above sea level via the 660-meter long bridge. Another problem the fisherfolk shared was the safety of their boat against theft. They claim that some people intentionally steal the boat's engine and sometimes the fuel. This is more evident in Talomo where their boats are farther from

their residence. With this challenge, they resort to rotating shifts in guarding the boats but only if they have favorable weather conditions.



■ **Figure 10.** Dikes built along the river towards the coastal road in Matina Aplaya.



■ **Figure 11.** The shores in Talomo and the dikes that also hinders access to the sea.

Another form of displacement experienced is the alteration in the fishing resources and activities due to the changes in the physical environment, specifically the shorelines. This is evident in Talomo and Matina Aplaya where the dikes were constructed on the shores near the communities. The removal of the mangroves and other vegetation in the area means the reduction or, sadly, the disappearance of spawning grounds for some marine species such as shrimps and crabs, which the fisherfolk stated were abundant before the construction of the coastal road and dikes. The figures below show the difference before and after the construction of the coastal road.



■ Figure 12. A comparison of Talomo and Matina Aplaya areas in 2016 and 2023.

We could notice the reduction of mangroves and other vegetation especially along the riversides of both Talomo River on the left and Matina River on the right. The shifting shorelines are also evident in the old photo. The bridge's base platform could have changed or is constantly changing the shorelines at present together with the changing tides and waves. We could also notice a clump of vegetation at the mouth of the Matina River along the dikes. This is the result of "mangrove caring." As the community leaders stress, "Planting is not enough; we need to care for what we plant."

PUBLIC FORUM ON THE IMPACTS OF THE COASTAL ROAD TO THE FISHING COMMUNITIES

On 22 November 2024, a public forum on fishing communities and urbanization gathered fisherfolks, barangay representatives, academics, and representatives from various government agencies to discuss the sociocultural and economic impacts of the Davao City Coastal Road project on the city's coastal communities. The forum sought to foster collaboration among the participants, provided a platform for discussing the preliminary findings of the study, and facilitated critical conversations to shape people-centered policies for inclusive development and urban sustainability.

The discussions highlighted key findings, such as the shifting identities and livelihoods of fishing households, disruptions in access to traditional fishing areas, the community's adaptation to urbanization, and other matters even beyond the scope of this study which we believe also needed reflection. These insights led to robust dialogue and raised significant directions, including:

1. The progress of the proposed Community Fish Landing Center

A representative from Barangay Talomo raised concerns about the lack of progress on a proposed Community Fish Landing Center in Matina Aplaya. During earlier consultations with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), it was suggested that such a facility could be established near Punta Dumalag to serve local fish cage owners. Despite assurances from DPWH at the time, the project has yet to materialize, even as construction of the coastal road has advanced to the Agdao area. The representative emphasized the need for the center, highlighting its potential to provide displaced fisherfolk with a dedicated space for

livelihood activities, especially those who lost their fishing boats or equipment. She also suggested involving agencies like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the local government in realizing the project. This was answered by DPWH who stated that these were considered earlier in the project after the residents and fisherfolk expressed their concerns. However, the proposed designs and solutions regarding the fish landing and the artificial boat dockings became hard to implement because the DPWH had difficulties negotiating the road right-of-way with the landowners.

2. Community consultation and displacement of mangrove riprapping projects

A community leader from Matina Aplaya, voiced concerns about a mangrove riprapping project funded through a community loan in partnership with the Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines (HPFPI). This project involved constructing a 23-meter protective barrier against waves. However, during the coastal road construction, heavy equipment damaged the riprap structures without prior consultation with the community. Despite earlier assurances from DPWH engineers that such projects would be implemented with community input, the residents were shocked and distressed by the lack of communication. They sought clarification on why the consultation process was bypassed and how such incidents could be avoided in future government projects affecting local communities. DPWH answered this by explaining that this particular project was under the District Office, which is a separate office, and that such an event occurred due to changes in design in consideration of the flooding in the area.

3. Relocation of displaced communities and support for women

A representative from the Women's Studies and Resource Center raised concerns about the relocation of communities displaced by the coastal road construction. She inquired about the government's plans for relocating affected residents and sought updates on the current conditions of these communities, particularly focusing on the welfare of women. This inquiry was not properly addressed since representatives from the LGU (particularly the housing division) were not present. However, she highlighted the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by

women in displacement scenarios and ensuring their voices are included in planning and development processes.

4. Defining boundaries for waterfront activities

A member of the academe shared insights from her study on waterfront accessibility and water edge design. Her research revealed a lack of defined boundaries between fishing and non-fishing zones, particularly on areas like Sta. Ana Wharf, which is a designated transport hub. She emphasized the need to establish and publicly communicate clear boundaries to ensure stakeholders are informed about permissible activities in specific areas. This would promote better management of the waterfront and its uses. The DPWH representative, on the other hand, stood firm that this concern is out of their hands, but more on the City Land Use Planning side. Aside from that, they stated that the Coastal Road Project made its own adjustments on its boundaries by moving its edges farther away from the houses despite costing more for the sake of avoiding more displacements and demolitions.

5. Barangay market development

A barangay official from Barangay 23-C (Isla Verde) shared plans to develop a market near the water to benefit local fisherfolk. The proposed location would allow boats to dock, making fresh fish available to consumers. He highlighted the challenges faced by the fisherfolk, including recent storm damage to boats, with some receiving insurance support, but many still awaiting claims.

6. Impact of coastal road construction on 4Ps beneficiaries

A representative from DSWD discussed the effects of the coastal road construction on 4Ps beneficiaries in Barangay 23-C. She highlighted that while the Badjao community gained a designated area to sell goods away from traffic, the construction caused disruptions, especially for youth, leading to issues like drug use and riots due to the inaccessibility of the area. She noted that some families received financial assistance from the NHA for relocation but expressed concerns about long-term support. She suggested further consultations with the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) to address these challenges.

7. Suggestions for improving livelihood and support for fisherfolk through the creation of *payaw*

A forum participant proposed to help local fisherfolk create a *payaw* (artificial reef or fish sanctuary) closer to their communities. A nearby *payaw* would reduce the need for long travels to other places like Malita and Santa Cruz. She expressed concern for the hardships faced by fisherfolk and suggested that local associations could manage these *payaws*, providing a more sustainable fishing area closer to home. She hopes that this initiative could be considered by the city as a way to support the fisherfolk's livelihood.



■ **Figure 13.** Participants from different sectors raised concerns during the public forum.

Concerns were also raised about the ecological impacts of the coastal road on marine resources. Another point raised is if there is any politician already identified to use the study as a reference to craft policies on future big projects such as the coastal road that could impact the vulnerable communities of the city. The forum concluded with a collective acknowledgment of the results presented by the proponents and information shared by the speakers. Most of the questions raised were addressed accordingly by the concerned bodies to the extent of their knowledge and the discussions were very useful in this study, especially on the recommendations crafted by the proponents.

CONCLUSION

The construction of the Davao City Coastal Road has had a profound impact on the fishing communities through which this project passes. This new infrastructure has undoubtedly enhanced vehicle accessibility by providing an alternative route that bypasses the congested city center. However, this improvement in transportation has come with significant challenges that have put pressure on the sustainability and livelihoods of the local fishing communities.

It is essential to emphasize the importance of public consultations in the planning and implementation stages of large government projects, particularly those that affect vulnerable communities. While it is noted that consultations were conducted prior to the project's implementation, feedback from the communities suggests that these consultations may not have been as thorough or inclusive as necessary. The absence of key documents, such as the EIA, for public reference further complicates the situation, making it difficult to assert that a comprehensive consultation process took place with the affected communities.

Despite the notable benefits that the coastal road brings, it is crucial to strike a balance between development and the preservation of community life and well-being. This includes maintaining the sense of belonging that community members feel towards their local area and their integration into the broader urban environment. To achieve this balance, sustainable actions and inclusive strategies must be prioritized, ensuring that development does not come at the expense of the livelihoods and well-being of the communities involved.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussions above, the following three major recommendations may be made to assist, alleviate, or lessen the impact and influence of building big projects such as the dikes and coastal road in Davao City among the three barangays that were taken into consideration in this study:

1. Community Participation in Planning and Development

Consultations or *pulong-pulong* to communities affected by the projects were made as presented by the DPWH during the forum and during the key informant interview. However, through the FGD and KII conducted with the selected participants from the communities, it was found that the consultations made were not comprehensive. We need to recognize the importance of community participation in the planning process and improve community consultation protocol, especially for big-ticket projects that can affect the lives of communities living on the margins such as coastal communities. These include the men, women, and youth in each barangay. A standard on what constitutes a successful or reliable consultation or *pulong-pulong* with the community should be explored. As what Cilliers and Timmermans suggested:

The opportunity to participate in civic life has been identified as a core human need, essential to the psychological health of individuals and communities. Meaningful public participation in decision making on urban environmental issues is seen as important for (i) upholding the notion of participatory democracy, (ii) the effectiveness of the planning process and the quality of the planning outcomes, (iii) improving the quality of, and to validate, political decision making. (2014, 417)

Considering the three barangays, we could propose the following to mitigate the issues at hand:

- a. Look into the needs of each barangay for a safe docking port as it is the most urgent given the everyday struggles of fishers in each of the three barangays. The proposed docking area should consider the number of fishers in each barangay. To date, there are 217 fishers in Barangay 23-C, 80 fishers in Barangay Matina Aplaya, and 71 fishers in Barangay Talomo.

- b. Consult the local government agency and the community on the best approach to rehabilitating the lost or denuded mangrove forests and propose an ordinance on the spawning grounds of marine species.

One good example initiated by the fisherfolk is the ingenious use of natural elements such as the mangrove in building their boat docking and at the same time as a shelter (see figure 14). Other members of the community will be following these steps in building their docking areas as shared by a community leader during the forum. A representative from the City Agriculturist Office also shared that fishes are now adapting by making tetrapods, or concrete water breakers, as their spawning grounds. The combination of these natural elements and concrete materials could greatly help in the rehabilitation.



■ **Figure 14.** A boat docking area surrounded by mangroves and nipa serving as protection from the strong waves.

2. History and Placemaking in Fishing Communities

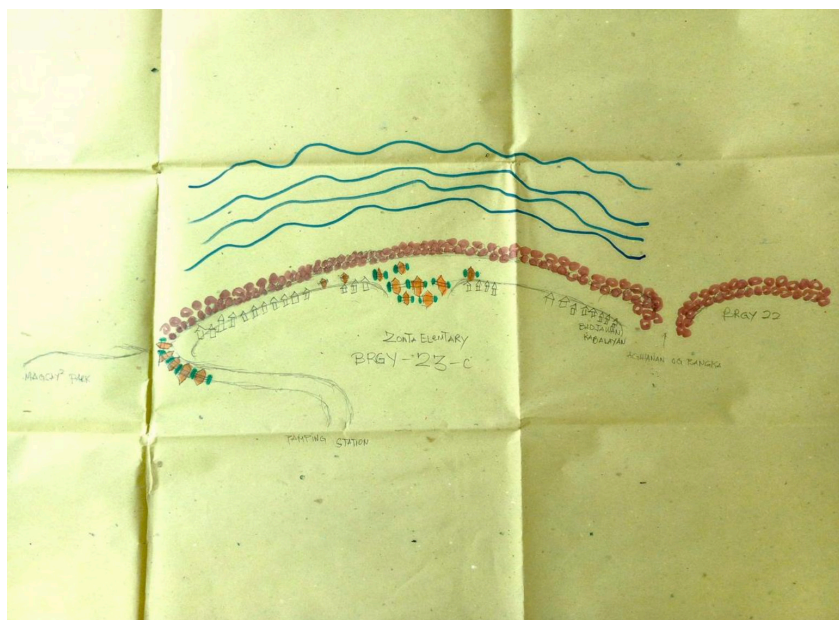
Cilliers and Timmermans stated:

Meaningful participation in the decisions that affect people's lives is an integral component of their sense of being sufficiently empowered to have some influence over the course of events that shape their lives. To create living cities and strengthen civic identity, people need to take an active role in claiming their sense of belonging by cultivating political debate over the quality of the built environment and the culture of cities. (2014, 417)

The community needs identity and at the same time acquires ownership of it. By having identity and ownership, these minority and at the same time vulnerable groups of the urban environment could become proud constituents of the city.

As part of making the communities a place of importance, the communities who participated in this study could be advanced further by these proposals:

- a.** Help reframe fishing as part of Filipino cultural practices as it serves as our link to our historical past as a community and as a nation. This perspective will hopefully help protect fishing as a socio-cultural marker in our society.
- b.** Create nodes or sections in the barangay that can help preserve the past such as modest community museums (e.g., in one wall in the barangay hall) to serve as platforms for transmitting nostalgic memories to future generations.



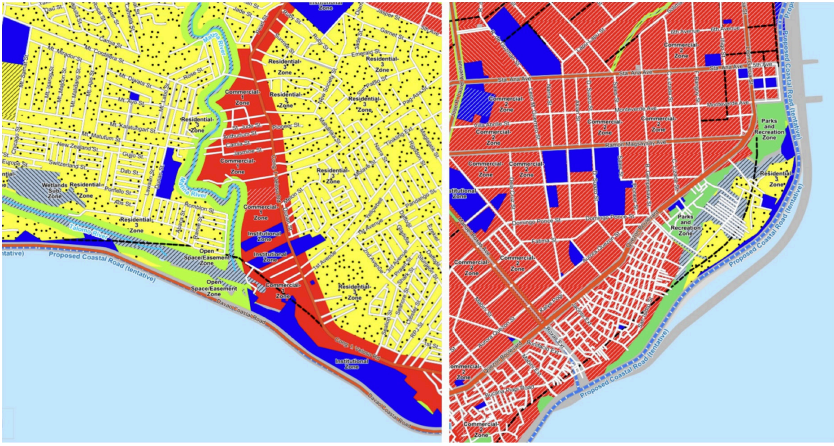
■ **Figure 15.** Fisherfolk participated in mapping of their community before and after the construction of the coastal road.

3. Fishing Communities as Essential Spatial Aspects

Fishing in urban areas should be recognized as an aspect that contributes to collective food security, sharing of knowledge and experiences, and economic and racial diversity (Boucquey and Fly 2021) and thus should be included in all planning and development processes. As Tsakanika and Clauzet (2017, 17) stated, “[T]here is a need for an integrated management, particularly for the population that lives and is economically active on the coastlines.” To do this, a deeper comprehension of the effects of urban development in those areas is required, as it perpetuates the current economic development model while neglecting the needs of the local communities.

More specifically, the following could be considered in planning cities with urban fishing communities:

- a. Convey the results of the study to ongoing discussion on the National Land Use Act specifically highlighting the influence of urbanization projects on fishing communities in the country in terms of conservation, production, settlement, and infrastructure (Parrocha 2020 in Manejar 2022). It is important to note here that the country has been trying to finalize this bill for three decades now (Navarro 2023).
- b. Explore the concept and context of fishing coastal communities as peri-urban spaces in Davao City and other regions, and raise this query: What is the nature of peri-urban spaces in contrast to urban and rural appropriations of space?
- c. Reframe the value of fishing along the coastal road as part of the urban food supply chain to help put more premium on the fishers’ efforts within the broader scale of the urban community.



■ **Figure 16.** The updated land use of Davao City showing selected study areas (from OCPDO).

This research believes that by making these suggestions, the actual worth and contributions of urban fishing communities would be accorded the weight and respect they deserve. We hope that these recommendations will create favorable circumstances for the fishing communities in the city and surrounding areas and could serve as a reference to other urban areas of the country where projects such as the Davao City Coastal Road could affect this vulnerable part of the urban fabric.

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