RE-ASSEMBLING FOOD AND MEANING: DIRTY, UNHEALTHY AND DANGEROUS DOG-EATING IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT The key to understanding any social phenomenon is to follow how actors tread the social landscape and describe how they form groups, fuse meanings, and create associations from different frames. In this thesis, I employ Bruno Latour's reconceptualization of assemblage to trace how NGOs and other actors create assemblages by fusing or defusing dog-eating with discourses on dirt, epidemic and human rights. More specifically, NGOs such as *LinisGobyerno* and Animal Kingdom Foundation (AKF) produce assemblages that align dog-eating with sanitation, violence and epidemic. On the other hand, supporters of the practice try to invert these claims by foregrounding dog-meat consumption as an entitlement that is protected by both local and international legal codes. This thesis also engages with previous attempts to analyze dog-eating and their failure to deal with the quotidian ways in which actors bundle the practice with multiple frames. Rather than presupposing how peoples' understanding of food as inflections of deep binary-oppositions, or an epiphenomenon of productive forces, I opine that we must change gear and refocus on how actors themselves interpret contentious food practices by following their actions in a flattened social world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We always think of academic work as an offspring of plain individual struggle- a nebulous thing that is concocted after long nights of reading books and staring like a clueless child at a computer screen or spending days of self-loathing. Such image has never taken root in this piece of scholarship because this is a child of collective effort- taking turns with different emotions. I want to express my gratitude to several people who helped me bring my ideas into fruition. For keeping me sane with their company and humor, I am indebted to Saif, Nikhil and Kristina. From the other side of the world, Tusher, Weronika, Reaksmey, Mahayu and Nini are constant reminders of how memory is never a figment of imagination. To Prof. Jean Louis-Fabiani and Prof. Dorit Geva, my two brilliant supervisors who tamed the "Strong Program" in me, thank you. *For S.*

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CHAPTER I: Problematic Canine

Each year, at least 200,000 dogs are slaughtered for their meat in the Philippines (Alegre 2010). This figure persists despite the presence of a law on animal welfare and a growing protest from both international and local non-government organizations. Instead of bowing to such pressure, the Philippine government has promulgated the *Indigenous Peoples Right Act* (IPRA), which indirectly recognizes practices of indigenous communities, such as dog-meat eating, as "sacred" cultural heritage. Therefore, the existence of two conflicting legal codes (*protecting animal rights* vs. *cultural rights*) has made dog-eating an ambivalent practice that polarizes Philippine society between those who advocate for animal welfare and groups who lobby for indigenous peoples' rights.

As dog-eating is linked to cultural rights and animal welfare, a dominant view explains its contentious nature as an epiphenomenon of how it transgresses state regulations. This account does not only run in the content of public debates but also appears in recent scholarship on dog-eating. Unfortunately, this analysis couches a highly ambivalent practice exclusively within the rubrics of legal explanation but fails to recognize the non-legal frames that surreptitiously amplify dog-eating into an issue beyond judicial script. It remains puzzling how the tensions generated by these conflicting discourses do not exist in recent scholarships on dog-eating. Instead, the binary-oppositions between law *vs.* culture and tradition vs. "modernity" have become a ready-made analytic frame that is invoked in dominant analysis on dog-eating.

Nevertheless, the multiple meanings and contested frames reflect the deeper tension between the rule (and role) of law and culture against the backdrop of a "modernist" narrative, which characterizes postcolonial Philippines. In the end, dog-eating becomes an

assemblage or an associative process where competing meanings about ethnicity, citizenship, heritage and the level of state control are sewn together in an alignment to construct coherent argument on food. Thus, the battle over the validity of what we put into our mouth is an endeavor bigger than eating itself: it is waged in a field where cultural structures of meanings are constantly assembled and deployed.

In this regard, how do we interpret peoples' reaction to contentious food practices such as dog-eating? How do we explain food without resorting to an elucidation that plainly invokes binarism or an assumed antagonism between heritage and law *or* culture and social change? In this thesis, I provide an account of how different social actors assemble dog-eating into an object of conflicting symbolic interpretation. *More specifically, I analyze published materials on dog-eating to identify how NGOs and other actors create assemblages by fusing or defusing dog-eating with discourses on dirt, epidemic, violence and human rights.* Two specific but interlocking research questions guide this thesis:

1. What are the meanings that key social actors embody toward dog- eating?

2. How are these meanings assembled and what specific elements are amplified and silenced?

The concept of assemblage and the contingency of social action shall form part of this thesis' analytic framework. More specifically, Bruno Latour's critical engagement with how scholars must *trace associations* in mapping the contour and path of interaction is taken in this research as a springboard to elucidate the various means through which NGOs and other social actors bundle and fuse frames and discourses into coherent interpretive assemblages. Before I turn to my analysis, I first provide a review of modern and contemporary theories on food by noting how scholarship on eating is dominated by competing emphasis on materialism and deep structures. Next, I engage with the concept of assemblage by tapping into the work of Bruno Latour (2005) and present how his core assumptions operate in my

discussion. The other half of this thesis applies this framework by analyzing the fractious issue of dog-meat consumption in Northern Philippines.

CHAPTER 2: Essentialist, Materialist and Other "-ists"…

There is something peculiar about food that makes it elusive as subject for social analysis. In contrast to other social entities (i.e. labor, social movements and revolution) that have preoccupied the interest of social scientists, the corporeality and contingency in gastronomy make food and the act of eating difficult to pin down under the purview of abstract analytic frames like class, ideology, hegemony or even culture. Yet, as in most cases, the quickest path that scholars tread to reach an explanation is to throw premature accounts that essentialize food as a residual element. Like an unknown mystical force that hovers in midair, food scholars tend to pull concepts as explanatory *deus ex machina* and produce either plain tautology or "*weak*" analysis (Alexander & Smith 2003). While this delivers merit as a scholarly exercise, it plays with the danger of subsuming a complex phenomenon under one overarching frame. A representative literature of these opposite poles could be gleaned upon in the works of some of the most prominent scholars in the social anthropology of food like Marshall Sahlins and Marvin Harris.

In this chapter, I outline dominant strands of analytic engagement on food studies. First, I argue that food scholarship has been (or *is*) debilitated by an on-going friction among scholars who separately engage with their craft as (1) residual elements of external forces (i.e. class and ideology) and (2) guided by deep structural elements (i.e. binary). At the second-half of my discussion, I engage with an alternative framework by tapping into the works on assemblage to surface what I believe is a more fruitful frame to understand peoples' reaction to dog-eating as a contingent process. In the next chapter, I provide an extensive illustration of how food could be best construed as an assemblage by looking at how NGOs and state actors try to navigate policies in constructing their argument against *or* for dog-eating.

2.1: Omniscient matter

Contentious food practices have received a fair amount of attention in the social sciences. In anthropology alone, one encounters Marshall Sahlins' structuralist account of food abhorrence in American cuisine and the notorious efforts of Marvin Harris (1966) to provide a cultural materialist analysis of India's most revered cow. I will not try to present a review of their works but to emphasize the crucial elements that can be useful in my analysis. To my mind, the study of food in its present form has been experiencing a partial "weakness or paralysis" in view of the dominance of materialist and essentialist explanations.

The former is best captured in Marvin Harris' long engagement with a materialist brand of anthropology since his works are anthropological rendition of Marx's materialist approach which prioritizes the infrastructural base as the genesis of cultural practice. In one of his most polemic articles published in *Current Anthropology*, Harris (1966) opines that the sacredness of cow in India is an emergent practice, a consequence of the greater benefits that one accrues from this animal, either in the form of traction or as source of cheap fuel for domestic use. Accordingly, this "positive function" allows a functional homeostasis where the physical and social environments exist in a symbiotic relationship that is kept in place by the sacred cow complex. To illustrate his claim, Harris enumerates how prohibiting consumption of beef springs from the positive benefits that an Indian farmer can generate by not slaughtering his cow. For example, a cow is an additional traction for hauling, transport, irrigation and ploughing in a labour extensive agriculture. Moreover, it also provides cheap fuel for domestic consumption in the form of dung while its hide is a raw material to support India's leather industry. Amidst these "positive" functions, Harris considers the cattle's sacrality as an ideational god that protects these benefits by culturally prohibiting people not to consume beef. I quote,

> …explanation of taboos, customs, and rituals associated with management of Indian cattle be bought in "positive-functioned" and probably "adaptive" processes of the ecological system of which they are a part of, rather than in the influence of Hindu theology (Harris 1966: 51).

To be fair, Harris' argument must be understood within the larger debate of anthropological practice in the 70s where the dominance of ethnoscience and neoevolotionary theories has dislodged the role of productive forces as constitute elements. Fresh from his ethnographic work in Mozambique, Harris has realized that the infrastructural layer of production is fundamental to any understanding of culture. From such an intellectual milieu, Harris tries to resurrect Marxist tradition in anthropology and put forward an argument on how culture is homologous and contingent to its "positive" function. To a large degree, Harris' notion of favourable function implies a positive utility where the benefit of eating beef stew is outweighed by the various utility one can achieve by keeping his cattle alive.

Yet, Harris' cultural materialist account comes not without a warning. If we follow his framework to explain dog-eating, we can clearly elucidate how dog-meat provides protein and possibly an ingenious source to keep a constant supply of food. However, this frame does not account the pivotal role of highly-charged public discourses as equally-influential structures that guide people's decision about their food habit. It falls short, for example, in decoding the racialized and nationalist rhetoric that have played recently in the state-wide prohibition on beef consumption in some Indian states. While we may accept that food taboos have developed out of utility, Harris' cultural materialism does not provide convincing framework to engender an explanation about the coercive discourses and frames that have come to mobilize food prohibitions in other societies.

Such an obsession with materialist account of food has found its lifeblood in Philippine social sciences. With an unwavering influence of Marxist philosophy, the manner through which dog-eating is approached by Filipino scholars is an account of poverty. Nestor Castor,

for example, asserts that dog-meat is a cheap alternative for pork or poultry and an essential source of protein.

> Poor people don't have access to steak. How can you forbid them from eating a *cheaper form of meat* while others have the means to purchase more expensive types of meat?...That's their concept of meat, why judge them on that? Unless these poverty issues are resolved, these illegal trades will still happen (Nestor Castro as quoted in Sarte 2012: 3, emphasis is mine).

Like Harris, he provides a half-baked account of the practice as he (1) simply subsumes the penchant for dog as an expression of poverty and (2) fails to situate his analysis within the more complex configuration of food culture in Philippine society. In my own fieldwork in Northern Philippines, I have observed how the price of dog-meat is higher than pork or poultry. As I have argued in my previous work, the popularity of dog cuisine springs from cultural codes that symbolically transform the meaning of eating as an index of multiple ideas about heritage, ethnicity and, at times, masculine virility. These codes do not appear in Castro's explanations or in other works (see: Buenaobra 2009).

2.2: Essentialized deep structure of eating

Another strand that has dominated the landscape of food studies works from an assumption about the presence of rigid structures. These forms of analysis spring from the works of structuralist anthropologists, like Marshal Sahlins, who consider the existence of deep structures that govern human behaviour. For Sahlins (1990), culture is akin to a deep structure that regulates human behaviour, a pre-existing structure that is coercive and autonomous but historically contingent. While it is contingent, it has an enormous impact as it guides how people understand their world. To demonstrate his argument, Sahlins tries to explain the aversion towards dog-eating in American society as replication of codes that order animals in a classificatory pattern.

For Sahlins, the primary reason why Americans do not recognize dog as an edible meat stems from its role as recipient of human emotion. Unlike chicken, pig, and turkey, dogs stay

at the fringe of American diet as they are domesticated to become *object* of human emotion. Sahlins believes that a binary opposition between object-subject is modulated into another grouping which differentiates internal from external self. Since dogs are objects of human emotion, they become part of man's internal self, either as pets or as friends. And as they are extensions of the human self, consuming dog-meat is tantamount to cannibalism. On the contrary, it is permissible to enjoy pork steaks and chicken stew because these animals are externalized and domesticated for consumption. Quoting his own words,

> The distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' thus duplicates within the animal the differentiation drawn between edible and tabu species, the whole making up a single logic on two planes with the consistent implication of a prohibition on cannibalism. It is this symbolic logic that organizes demands (p. 99).

A parallel cultural code inflects the disgust over the eating of innards or internal organs. Consuming pig intestine, liver and kidney often produce a sense of horror as they signify the other side of *edible-inedible*/*inner self-outer object* binaries. The taste for external parts (i.e. meat and fat) over innards springs from how Americans mark animals in relation to human body parts. This means that the inner-outer binary informs how "we (Americans) conceive our innermost selves as our true selves" (Sahlins 1990: 99) and anything external can be eaten. Therefore, animal organs, such as liver, intestines and kidneys, are not different from human liver, intestines and kidneys and eating them is synonymous to consuming the innards of another human being or the internal organ of your own family member. *Voila,* Sahlins then claims that dog-eating is cannibalism!

Can the *pet vs. food* binary explain our case or must we subject our analysis by assuming the quintessential presence of deep structures? For one, there are clear drawbacks in Sahlins' account of dog-eating, which could be attributed to his close affinity with structuralism's predilection for binarism. More than this, the complexity of American diet is difficult to elucidate by simply deploying a Saussureean or Levi-Strauss-inspired structuralist approach. If we read the prohibition as an inflection of *internal-external* or *subject-object* binary, we

might fail to interrogate how internal organs are made into popular cuisines (i.e. pig's feet, goose liver) or account the diachronic transformation of guts into a soul food associated with America's Black community. Similarly, a closer look into the function of dogs in Philippine society would render such binary weak. Dogs have always been utilized not simply as pets, but more importantly as sacrificial animals during death rituals or rites to avert witchcraft. The binary becomes an analytic frailty as dog could be construed both as pet and as food.

Above all, while the strength of Sahlins' framework in elucidating the role of competing structures allows for an alternative reading of food practices like dog-eating, it fails to account the processual unfolding of meaning as it presupposes an *a priori* existence of deep structures. Such a tendency re-echoes a severe form of essentialist stance (Fuchs 2005) or an illustrative example of downward conflationism (Archer 2000). In addition, although it has endeavoured to escape the materialist account in the works of prominent food anthropologist like Marvin Harris (1977), it has nevertheless committed the same drawback by presupposing an unavoidable presence of universal structures that short-circuit social phenomenon as an inflection of binary-oppositions. Are there any possible alternatives to ameliorate what we have discussed so far as weaknesses in Harris' and Sahlins' explanations? In the following section, I will turn to my own work and revisit my analysis for some answers.

2.3: Weakness in the Strong Program: a failed alternative?

Explaining contentious phenomenon such as dog-eating needs an analytic framework which recognizes the conjunctural contingencies that pepper the messy banter among involved social actors. In this regard, the analytic tools of the *Strong Program* (SP) of the emerging field of cultural sociology, which culls its theoretical ancestry from symbolic anthropology and structuralism (Alexander 2003), have provided novel ways to elucidate the problematic function of cultural structures in plotting the contour of competing meanings

over dog-eating. By emphasizing at the core of its explanation the long-running presumption about the universality of binaries, the Strong Program treads the landscape of social analysis by creatively charting how the thicket of public meaning is an inflection of deep structures. The stress on structures has put forward an old idea of cultural autonomy through the omniscient existence of binary codes that autonomously alter social reality. In the Strong Program, the independence of economic sphere as the genesis of meaning and structure do not hold a permanent influence over superstructure. Along this line, collective codes and public discourses are considered autonomous social facts that impose coercive effect over the conduct of human affairs.

In my previous work[1], I have argued for an analysis that transposes the Strong Program of cultural sociology into food studies by taking into account how ambiguity is an epiphenomenon of competing legal binaries that separately advocate for the protection of animal welfare and recognition of dog-eating as a cultural heritage. In that paper, I unpacked the meaning-structures that inform the contested food practice of eating dogs in the Philippines. By employing *structural hermeneutics* of Strong Program, I analyzed the interaction of meanings employed by two groups of social actors: animal welfare advocates and supporters of cultural rights. The debate, however diverse, is informed by binary oppositions that frame dog-eating in a polarized image. On the one hand, the animal welfare group considers dog-eating as violation of animal rights and an insignia of barbarism. On the other hand, the practice is treated as sacred component of ritual that has spiraled into a national symbol of Filipino culture since the 1970s. As a result, the antagonism of these legal principles has thrown dog-eating into a contemporary illustration of cultural ambiguity, or a

1 "*Interpreting Food: Ambiguity and Competing Meanings on Dog-eating in the Philippines*". (2014). Unpublished MA thesis. Masaryk University, Czech Republic.

liminal marker that is host to conflicting notions about heritage and identity in the Philippines.

Unlike a powerist or class-based analysis, the Strong Program emphasizes the autonomy of cultural structures as constitutive elements in the distribution of power and resources. In this way, the fractious issue over dog-eating results from the clash of different cultural notions of food and never an exclusive outcome of how Filipinos break legal codes that protect animal welfare. Specifically, competing views of sacrality and dirt are utilized to invigorate the social banter among NGOs. What emerge from such an analysis is an innovative fusion of structuralism and a hermeneutically driven account of how diverging meanings are amplified and determined by deep structures.

Nevertheless, the Strong Program does not appear without a caveat. While its strength in explaining the role of competing structures allows for an alternative reading of food practices like dog-eating, it fails to account the *processual* unfolding of meaning as it presupposes an *a priori* existence of deep structures. Even if it employs a meaning-centered analysis with its affinity to hermeneutics, the promise of capturing processes of symbolic interpretation is straightjacketed by simply invoking Durkheim's binarism as foundational structure of all human interactions. Moreover, while I have outlined the nuances of how dog-eating is strategically truncated as an ambivalent icon of different frames, a recent re-reading of my empirical materials has revealed several elements that I missed in my previous work. These will compose the whole argument of my thesis. To some degree, this failure is a consequence of my close affinity to a highly-structuralist tradition of cultural sociology. I was not able to account, for example, attempts of slippage away from a neat binary opposition of legal vs. cultural *or* tradition and change.

More than what I have discussed as inherent lack in my work, the weakness also lies in the predilection to forward an assumption about the nature of food even before the conduct of any analysis. I argue that this tendency has brought more problems than provide answers to the works of Marvin Harris and Marshall Sahlins (including myself). To commence an investigation on food by subsuming its character to productive forces or deep structures runs the risk of an incomplete, if not, tautological explanation. Again, as I said in the preceding paragraphs, I do not completely discredit the novelty of a class-based or a materialist analysis. But to start an inquiry that seeks to "verify" the existence of such analytic concepts in the empirical world delivers an incomplete work. To subject food as homologous to productive forces or as small twigs that spring from deeply rooted structures denies the creative (*or destructive*) acts through which individuals give or defuse meanings. By approaching deductively the landscape of social analysis with a predetermined assumption about the subject, one fails to observe interactions that do not confirm the analytic framework. For instance, Marvin Harris has unwittingly turned a blind eye to cultural codes that lend sacrality upon India's cattle while Marshall Sahlins is incapacitated to deal with the diachronic transformation of internal organs into popular cuisines.

2.4: Assembling Eating: Towards an Alternative

How then must we study food or any social elements if we do not start with analytic assumptions? Do we simply abandon concepts (i.e. class and ideology) and dive into our analysis without tools to help us wade through the complexity of the social world? How do we account dog-eating without jumping to binaries or to other analytic frames? In this section, I want to extend my discussion and explore the concept of assemblage in Bruno Latour's work and come-up with a more convincing argument about its applicability to dog-eating. Let me start by clarifying how I define assemblage and how it operates in this

research. To accomplish this task, I want to revisit a pair of thinkers who have provided Latour the "initial" seed to build his ideas.

An enduring legacy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988) is an assumption about the ontological nature of the social world as *rhizomatic*. Such peculiar nature is only amenable to explanation by allowing *multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points*. As such, any attempt at elucidating social reality must commence by looking at points of connection among semiotic chains, power organization and the immediate circumstances of social struggle. In this model, culture and society are like surfaces that spread to all possible directions, filling-in fissures and carving their own niche. They are maps of wide array of forces and influences with no beginning or end. Conceiving the world as a rhizome does not necessarily conjure-up an image of a humongous social field where all imaginable forms and things exist in a chaotic relationship. Rather, multiple elements are gathered into a single context or alignment (Li 2007) that attempts to prescribe intended effects- *productive, destructive or informatics*. The process of aligning or the production of points of convergence is what constitutes an assemblage. Quoting their words,

> In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds constitutes an *assemblage* (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 3).

Relatedly, the concept of assemblage as a non-hierarchical line of articulation and alignment has informed the infamous attempt of Latour (2005) to put forward a new *sociology of the social* that is predicated on an effort to explain the networks of interaction or trace the social world by following "the actors themselves" (p. 12). From Deleuze's and Guattari's original conception of assemblage as "lines" or nodes, he opines that a veritable sociological explanation has in its core the ability to catch individuals by following their traces (Luckhurst 2006). An investigation should catch,

> "…individual with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish" (Latour 2005: 12).

This implies that one must start by following the network or the *twist and turns* of actors' movement and emphasize how they form groupings or assemble diverse discourses and meanings into one association. Assemblage then is the process through which social actors, in a network of relation with other actors, *fuse, defuse and refuse meanings and discourses into coherent lines of articulations.* This network of relations is composed of different actors (or *actants* in Latour's word) that forge and break alliance and association to fulfill their claims. Each of them tries to convince other by expanding the network of relationship while building coherent lines of articulations or durable assemblages (Spinuzzi 2008). Hence, an assemblage is one that is built from intersecting actors whose end goal is to convince others by expanding their network of supporters. In every attempt to form coherent lines of articulation, objects, individuals and social institutions win acceptance of a distinct form of knowledge or claim (Latour 2005).

In this paper, I argue that the fractious issue over dog-eating in the Philippines springs from competing attempts at creating durable assemblages out of multiple frames and meanings. These alignments endeavor to propose and deify a horizon in which the practice of dog-eating must be understood. In such a horizon, the role of dog is spelt out and the boundary that separates accepted and anomalous account of dog-eating is enumerated to its minute detail. Hence, the emphasis on assemblage points to an analysis of how dog-eating is contingent to the active process of producing alignment or conjuring order out of "ensembles of heterogeneous elements" (Ong & Collier 2005: 5). Each of these attempts at assemblage tries to silence opposing ideas and create a discursive boundary within which dog-eating must be understood.

Undeniably, such a definition is underpinned by a fundamental assumption about the nature of human interaction. At the core of Latour's *Actor-Network Theory* (ANT) is the principle of *generalized symmetry* where entities in an assemblage have to be treated equally by describing them in the same terms. Certainly, differences are indelible elements in society but they are only realized and generated *in* the network of relations. There has to be no *a priori* order relation as sociological investigation should not be tied to an almost clichéd framing of society from "structural" or "interactionist" account or to customize tools of analysis that would render different means to interrogate various elements separately (Latour 2005). How does the principle of symmetry fit to my overall project? In contrast to how social action is elucidated in other sociological traditions by firstly adapting an analytic focus (i.e. class, ideology, discourse, culture), I want to launch my investigation by tracing how NGOs and other social actors try to build assemblages out of various meanings and frames to dog-eating. More fundamentally, I am putting forward an important image of action as highly-contingent process. That is, peoples' engagement with dog-eating should not be easily interpreted as a residue of abstract external realities but rather an on-going project which springs from the interactions of various elements. Interpreting dog-eating as a project of *assembling* signifies the active process in which an individuals or social groups orders a gamut of elements to construct an interpretation.

Briefly, in this thesis, I explore the ways in which specific assemblages on dog-eating are deployed and created into particular configuration that keeps on changing and constantly adapting to contingent forces. Social actors build assemblages by bundling one policy to another and shifting their strategy according to the nature of the problem. My main argument is to situate the fractious issue over dog-eating as a result of conflicting attempts at assembling various elements (i.e. policies) by diverse actors. These assemblages invoke

fundamentally different means of linking often-conflicting elements into an encompassing alignment through *1) appealing to public health, 2) spatial designation of sanitation, 3) projection of a violent eater 4) aestheticization of eating, 5) external and 6) internal domestication of food entitlement*. I will explain each of these elements in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology of/in Assembling

At the heart of assemblages are the processual constructions of meanings. The method to understanding this symbolic process is intricately linked to how we view the ontology of human society. If we consider society as an entity filled with assemblage-forming and meaning-making individuals, our epistemological apparatuses must be capable in explicating how actors behave in the social world by focusing on how they assemble different frames and discourses into a coherent claim. On the other hand, if we consider the social world as a closed system, our methods and the mode of our analysis are indistinguishable from how one outlines the route of rigid immovable matters. Yet, understanding assemblages is not a rigid endeavor as it requires a framework that allows us to trace and follow how actors form and deploy meaningful action.

3.1: Actors, Players, Landscape and Networks

Despite the complexity of the issue, there are identifiable players that hold dominant voices in the debate on dog-eating. While groups who oppose dog-eating enjoy extensive social capital, those who advocate for dog-eating as heritage or as cultural practice has no institutionalized alliance that can devote time and energy to the issue. Most of them are reporters and academics, while others are heads of government offices or members of the Philippine Parliament. For instance, Cecil Afable is the former editor-in-chief of *Baguio Midland Courier* and Isikias Picpican works as chief director of the Saint Louis University Museum in Baguio City. Nevertheless, the lack of noticeable group does not indicate lesser influence. Using a broadsheet that has extensive local readership and backings from the Parliament, the contest to recognize the cultural and heritage element of dog-eating puts the banter more contentious. These actors possess massive influence in public debates as they

were once local officials themselves or heads of influential bodies that are at the frontline of the debate on dog-meat eating.

The most visible animal-rights groups, *LinisGobyerno* and *Animal Kingdom Foundation*, have parallel objective but operate in different geographical "scale". Unlike LinisGobyerno, Animal Kingdom Foundation considers itself as an NGO that focuses on national issues related to protecting dogs. It has partnership with UK's *International Wildlife Coalition Trust* and the *Animal Welfare Institute* in the United States. With a far-reaching linkage and source of funds, AKF maintains a dog-pound, an adoption center and even offers legal assistance to individuals who are interested to file cases against violators of animal-rights. Furthermore, together with other animal-right advocates, AKF has initiated the call for the amendment of the *Animal Welfare Act* in 2012.

LinisGobyerno is a civil society group composed mostly of activist and journalist in the northern region of the country. When it was created in 2000, it named itself as a group that participates in an "all-out war" against government corruption (LinisGobyerno 2006). To date, LinisGobyerno has able to register more than a hundred cases against government officials and private companies for corruption and misconduct. However, their advocacy for dog-eating only started in 2002 when Animal Kingdom Foundation (AKF) partnered with them to investigate the dog-meat industry in Northern Philippines. Since then, Linis Gobyerno has made dog-eating as one component in their campaign against government corruption because food establishments that serve dog cuisine are owned, if not managed, by local bureaucrats.

3.2: Where to Trace Associations?

My analysis is a textual analysis of editorials, government policy releases, newspaper columns and op-eds written by NGOs and published in four Philippine broadsheets. All the

sources cover a wide range of opinions and sentiments about dog-meat consumption. All texts are published online, except print newspapers, including the *Manila Bulletin, Philippine Daily Inquirer* (PDI), *The Junction, Baguio Midland Courier* (BMC) and the online newsletters of *Animal Kingdom Foundation* (AKF) and *LinisGobyerno*.

The Manila Bulletin (MB) and Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) have the highest number of readership in the Philippines, although each has occupied an opposite pole with regards to how they treat public issues. Due to its role as channel of anti-dictatorial views during the Marcos regime, PDI serves as a pivotal source of opinions that are critical of state policies while the semi-state owned MB has always been the conduit of pro-government views. The other two papers are regional weeklies with wide readership in Northern Philippines. Like MB and PDI, Baguio Midland Courier (BMC) and The Junction represent the contrasting opinions on dog-eating. The latter labels itself as "*Pahayagang Palaban!*" (Fearless Newspaper!) while the former marks itself as an "exponent of the wonderland of the *Cordilleras* and the riches of the *Ilocandia"*. This means that BMC sees itself as a paper that celebrates the tradition and culture of Northern communities. I have to mention that *The Junction* is the *de facto* newsletter of the *LinisGobyerno,* a prominent animal welfare advocate group in the Philippines. Most of its members work as journalists for *The Junction.* I selected these papers to cover the diverging views in national and regional level.

Apart from printed texts, I also collected my data from official webpages of the *National Commission on the Rights of Indigenous People* (NCIP)[2], *LinisGobyerno*[3] and *Animal Kingdom Foundation*[4]. These online sources are platforms for publishing recent accomplishments such as successful police entrapment operations or to appeal for funds from donors. All the specified laws (i.e. Animal Welfare Act & Anti-Rabies Act) are accessible

[2] http://www.ncip.gov.ph/
[3] http://www.linisgobyerno.org/
[4] https://animalkingdomfoundation.wordpress.com/

from the database of *Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence* within the official page of Philippines' *Executive Branch*[5]. Recent revisions are posted in the same webpage including bills under review in the Lower and Upper Chambers of the country's *Legislative Branch*.

3.3: Coding Association

Overall, my data is generated from printed materials (i.e. newspaper articles, photos and press releases) and five official webpages. I have done a manual open coding to identify the emerging themes from these materials. After coding, I transferred the codes into an Excel file and grouped them according to themes that I have identified (*violence, dirt, disease, human rights, good food* and *space*). I deliberately excluded those themes that I already discussed in my previous work (e.g. *animal rights, heritage, and indigenous people*). These form the backbone of my analysis in the next chapter where one theme represents one form of assemblage. For example, the theme "disease" contains snippets of key views and arguments that put dog-meat consumption as harbinger of illness while codes that inform my analysis on dog-eating as an entitlement are grouped within "human rights".

3.4: Tracing Interpretive Assemblages

Plotting the traces of how actors associate various meaning is possible by following texts and public discourses. In this way, the hermeneutically-driven method of Geertz (1973) is taken as model that will guide how I trace the "codes, narratives, and symbols that create the textured webs of social meaning" (Alexander & Smith 2003, p. 13). More specifically, I analyze selected published materials on dog-eating in the Philippines to identify how NGOs and other actors create assemblages by associating dog-eating with notions of dirt, epidemic, violence and human rights. Editorial, newspaper articles and government press releases represent the on-going social banter because they reflect the horizon of meaning that informs

[5] http://www.gov.ph/

the social configuration of public opinion on dog-meat consumption. These texts and other written works for public consumption are expressions of opinions and textualized compendium of differing public sentiments. To subject them to interpretation allows us to follow the curve of assemblages as they serve as inscriptions of social meanings. I have to make clear, however, that public discourses do not simply refer to the ideas that every member of the community holds. Instead, they point to structures of signs that facilitate attempts of NGOs and other actors at assembling different views on dog-eating into reasonable claims.

CHAPTER 4: Assembling Dog-eating

An important dimension that must be emphasized about peoples' understanding of food is the easy slippage of meaning. The slipperiness stems from how social actors strategically bundle and associate their behavior to a symbolic landscape where actions attain new function in relation to how they could lend veracity to claims. In this chapter, I provide an illustration of how dog-eating is casted into different assemblages by NGOs. These forms of conjuring frames draw a boundary within which dog-eating is normatively understood by multiple actors.

To provide a context to the following sections, the first part of this chapter revisits my previous work on dog-eating and highlight the religious and historical layers of the practice. Afterwards, the second part identifies three pivotal means that NGOs, which lobby against dog-eating, employ to form coherent interpretive assemblages against dog-meat consumption. *Linis Gobyerno* and its allies conflate the practice as *danger to 1) public health 2) sanitation and 3) a moral symbol of violence*. On the other hand, supporters of the practice has taken their frames into a strategic inflation of food consumption by internally aligning dog-meat eating as an expression of right protected by national legislations. In addition, not only do they resort to internal alignment but also an external expansion or a universalization of their arguments by invoking international legal principles.

To reiterate, these frames have analytic implication on the current discussions on dog-eating. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the contour of academic discourse is largely truncated by an overemphasis on how dog-eating transgresses state laws on animal welfare or the binaristic opposition between modernist narrative and heritagization. Scholars, for instance, failed to grasp the complexity of the debate by easily subsuming their discussion

within a Marxist or structuralist account. Such frameworks fail to understand the possibility of how social actors navigate a landscape filled with inconsistencies.

4.1: Mise–en–scène: the gastronomic field

The popularity of dog-meat as a meal varies across regions although it is regularly associated as a distinct food of indigenous communities in the Northern provinces. Due to the strict implementation of the *Animal Welfare Act*, there is no official statistics to date apart from an estimate from the Animal Kingdom Foundation that put the figure at 200, 000 number of dogs butchered every year for their meat. The center of the industry is in Baguio City, a former American colonial hill station where I lived for more than eight (8) years as a student. During the entire duration of my studies, I have observed how the number of restaurants, which serves dog-meat, started to dwindle after the Animal Welfare Law was made into force. However, one could still visit these restaurants and request for dog-meat but this has to be done clandestinely because they no longer include it in their menu list to avoid police and other state authorities (see photo below for a sample menu).

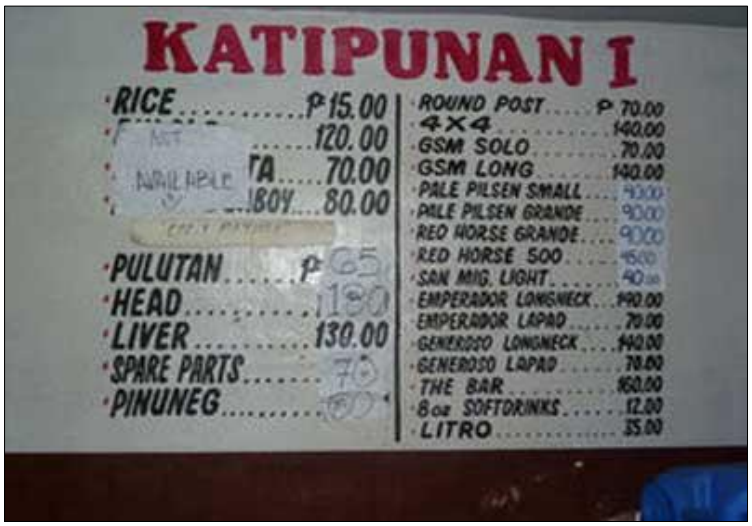


Illustration 1: A menu of a restaurant in Northern Philippines that includes dish prepared with dog-meat (Powel 2011).

4.1.1: Ritualized Offering

Among the indigenous *Igorots* in the north, dogs play a pivotal role as a ritual offering in death and cleansing ceremonies (Lacbawan 2014). It is used when the ritual *dao-es* is performed to appease the spirit of a dead person or to revert a curse caused by witchcraft. The conduct of this ritual takes one whole day in which the family who wants to perform *dao-es* summons village elders and prepare food for villagers who will participate. Oftentimes, the number of elders who perform the ritual is 10 to 20, although it could be higher if the family belongs to a big clan. In one *dao-es* that I witnessed, the immediate relatives of the family were present but did not participate directly in the ritual.

The *dao-es* is done in wake or immediately after a dead person is buried. As for illness, it is only executed if the family believes that witchcraft has been committed. If this the cause of death, the village elders will request the family to prepare a pair of dog and chicken as an offering. During the ritual, the elders will surround the sick person who sits next to the lifeless body of a freshly butchered dog. One by one, they will stand and spew litany of words while stomping their feet. Each of them will speak about the sick person and later on throw harsh phrases towards the lifeless animal. At this moment, the elders are "inciting" the dog to hurt the person who sponsored the witchcraft. *Igorot* believe that the soul of a lifeless dog will seek revenge by "barking and gnawing" (*gunggungan na ya ngabngaban*) the person who performed the witchcraft. Since the dead cannot return to life to seek revenge, his soul shall accomplish the task by "commanding" the dog.

At this point, it is important to note that among the Igorots dogs are considered brave and fearless since they possess a "hot" (*menpuos*) blood. However, the emic understanding of "hot" has to be explained as it could signify different meanings, apart from its denotative reference to heat. A *hot* character refers to dog's short-temper and territorial behavior

especially when provoked. This is precisely what the *dao-es* tries to achieve- to incite the dog to hurt the person who is responsible for the witchcraft. Additionally, this brings another dimension in relation to dog-eating. Aside from its ritualistic function, the "warmth" also applies to eating as it provides a way to survive the cold and nippy weather, not to mention as an aphrodisiac.

Overall, dogs are endowed with human character (i.e. *fearless)* that makes them appropriate as ritual objects to counter witchcraft or perform cleansing ceremonies after burial (Lacbawan 2014). But the ritualistic layer has taken another dimension when other social actors who had contacts with *Igorots* since the American colonial period did not perceived the symbolic function of dog in rituals positively. In the following section, I provide an illustration of how dog-eating is transformed into an index of Filipino barbarity and *raison d'être* for America's *benevolent assimilation*.

4.1.2: Orientalized Dog

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Spanish empire started to disintegrate after several of its colonies in Latin America and Asia demanded independence from Madrid. After a decade of anticolonial resistance, the Philippines was unfortunately ceded to the US along with Puerto Rico, Cuba and Guam after the payment of 20 million dollars to Spain in 1898. Immediately thereafter, the Philippines became the social laboratory of America's *benevolent assimilation* and the launching site for various projects aimed at introducing America's version of civilization in the Orient. Of all the practices that caught the attention of colonial administrators, dog-eating has had the most enduring mark in America's engagement with Philippine culture. A number of American bureaucrats-turned-anthropologists have written extensive account about the practice of dog-eating in the northern region of the Philippines. Not only did they reproduce factual observations, these colonial ethnographies

also served as pockets for orientalist indices of the violence and barbarity of natives' eating behavior. For example, the classic *The Bontoc Igorot* (1905) of Albert Jenks has devoted an extended discussion of how dogs are treated by the Igorots. I quote,

> The dog of the Bontoc Igorot is usually of a solid color, black, white, or yellow, really "buckskin" color. Where he originated is not known. He has none of the marks of the Asiatic dog which has left its impress everywhere in the lowlands of the west coast of Luzon—called in the Islands the "Chino" dog, and in the States the "Eskimo" dog.…*The dog receives little attention from his owners.* Twice each day he is fed sparingly with cooked rice or camotes (taro). Except in the case of the few hunting dogs, he does nothing to justify his existence. He lies about the dwelling most of the time, and is a surly, more or less evil-tempered cur to strangers, though when a pueblo flees to the mountains from its attacking enemies the dog escapes in a spiritless way with the women and children. He is bred mainly for ceremonial consumption. In Benguet the Igorot eats his dog only after it has been reduced to *skin and bones*. I saw two in a house so poor that they did not raise their heads when I entered, and the man of the house said they would be kept twenty days longer before they would be reduced properly for eating. (pp. 110-111, emphasis is mine).

An overarching narrative that has informed the colonial understanding of dog-eating is the hazy boundary that exists between pet and food. In Jenks' description, the utter disregard of natives for dog springs from its ambiguous function as a source of protein, ritual offering and as pet. Such multifaceted role contradicts the strict cultural code that clearly specifies the position of dog as human companion in the imperial center (Sahlins 1990). As such, for Jenks, this ambiguity explains why natives give "*little attention*" to their dogs as they have to be eaten "*skin and bones*". For the colonial administrators, the natives' eating habit is couched within an element of sadism where dogs need to suffer and starved before they enter the domain of food and "*ceremonial consumption*". This implies that the colonial rendering of dog-meat consumption portrays an image of a savage eater whose eating behavior revolves around (1) an element of brutality and (2) his inability to distinguish food from pet. In this case, dog-eating becomes an index to the native's mode of thinking which, for Jenks, is *violent and highly-visceral*. This *brutality and violence* intrinsic in the native's eating behavior is transformed into a predominant frame that is reproduced in the 1904 World Exposition in Missouri. In the fair, the image of head-hunting and dog-eating tribes provided

a living evidence to convince the American public of their moral responsibility to uplift the natives from their "natural environment" (New York Times Editorial 1904).

4.1.3: Displaying Violent Eaters

The same strand of colonial imagining is articulated by *Dean Worcester* in the formation of the *Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes*. As the institutional form of America's *benevolent assimilation*, the Bureau is mandated to "determine the most practicable means for bringing about…advancement in civilization and material prosperity" of the natives. Its most controversial project is the display of various groups of tribal communities in the *1904 World Exposition* in Missouri. More than 100 Igorots from northern Philippines were recruited to build a replica of an Igorot village within the 47 acres of land assigned to Filipino delegates. The community has replicated everything, from rice paddies to huts and communal courts. In the span of seven months, the exposition is transformed into an anthropological zoo where groups representing each of the American colonies in Latin America and Asia are put on display for public entertainment. As representatives of the Philippines, the Igorots are paid to perform ceremonies using dogs as religious offering. Even rituals for the dead and sick are accomplished to illustrate how dogs are slaughtered and eaten. At other times, they have to butcher and cook without the accompanying ritual due to public demand.

Indeed, the discourse of violent eater has made possible the production of an inferior race in need of colonial intervention. The wretchedness is rendered visible in the metropole by the orchestrated spectacle organized to stage the natural order of things and the predestined role of America as steward for backward races of humankind. In these events, barbarity is not simply represented but is transported from its spatial origin and performed with "skin and bone" in an American stage. What transpires then is a corporeal encounter, a localized and orchestrated rendition of how Columbus "discovered" his natives- a colonial

narrative of triumph unfolding in American soil. On the other hand, these events allow the colonial discourse of triumph to become a common knowledge that is open for public consumption (see Photo 1).

4.1.4: The Publicness of slaughtering and violence

After retiring from his role as a local administrator of the *Mountain Provinces* in Northern Philippines, the Bureau has employed Albert Jenks as chief curator for the Philippine villages in the Exposition. Again, the image of a violent and highly instinctual native in Jenks' ethnography is reproduced in ritual performances where dogs are slaughtered and consumed in the open ground (see photo 2. Subsequently, the act has generated intense discussion in the US although the debates have mostly centered not on the exploitative nature of the spectacle but on the sheer brutality of the natives (New York Times Editorial 1904). A prominent doctor, for instance, captures the colonial sentiment when he frames the appropriateness of dog-eating as "good food" but emphasizes how the practice provides legitimate reason for the American government to introduce civility and solutions to their "extreme violence". I quote,

> *In all the islands there is not a tribe that is not capable of self-government …"*Oh", you say "but they are head hunters and dog-eaters" They are, but I never could see why dog should not make *good food*. *Although they are extremely violent*, they only eat only clean, white young male dogs. As to the head-hunting…it does not compare unfavorably with some religious ideas prevalent in the United States (Starr 1908, emphasis is mine).

Photo 1 Igorots butchering dog in the Igorot Village of the 1904 World Exposition (Saint Louis Public Library 1904)

The colonial imagination of an incomplete native, a half-human or a juvenile whose level of human rationality is lacking and purely guided by visceral anguish is imputed into the practice of dog-eating. Furthermore, the publicness of the performance created an image of an inferior man whose level of decency impedes him to distinguish the strict boundary that exists between private and public space. As he is guided by sheer instinct, the native finds no qualm in displaying his eating habit in public while the American audience watches. In this way, the public slaughtering and consumption of dog-meat provide corporeal representation of the native's barbarity and penchant for violence. Such image, however, is not idiosyncratic to America's colonial engagement with the Philippines. Other colonial regimes have employed the perceived inclination of the native to violence as a legitimating claim for the *White Man's* burden. From depicting native women of French Indochina and African men as sexual predators, the image of a dog-eater also verifies the looseness and lack in native's moral universe.

The orientalist fascination for the violent dog-eater continues even after the breakdown of colonial powers. Interestingly, the contemporary debate that colors the conflicting opinions on dog-meat eating cruises several symbolic structures of meaning whose origin is traced back to American colonial discourses. More than a mudslinging at the rhetorical level, the

way social actors understand dog-meat consumption spans from its direct portrayal as signifier of "authentic" Filipino culture to its description as impurity that stains the "modern" Filipino society. These opposing discourses spring from the state, involved NGOs, media outfits and activists. While the issue generates public interest, there are recognizable institutions that play critical roles in this debate. The *LinisGobyerno*, *Animal Kingdom Foundation (AKF),* the *Office of City Veterinarians*, and the *Animal Welfare Institute* each deploy discourses that impact public opinion. These groups construe dog-eating by invoking its propinquity to barbaric, savage and uncivil life.

4.2: The Dirty and Violent Eating!

In the following chapter, I describe these discourses by emphasizing how public imaginaries of dirt and violence are creatively deployed into coherent interpretative assemblages. What is perhaps unique in the contemporary debate around dog-meat consumption is the frothing banter that has divided social actors who separately emphasize modernist narrative and heritage discourse. Each of these involved groups have constructed strategic interpretive tactic to derail or avoid an impasse with their opponent. Such situation has been the dominant mood in the Philippines. The antagonism between modernization rhetoric and arguments that portray the practice as heritage and cultural has opened-up several portals of meaning-construction where agents struggle to build and claim legitimacy upon a specific normative and hermeneutic field of understanding dog-eating. Yet, one must be wary not to subsume these multiple interpretive assemblages as epiphenomena of the binary opposition of *modernity vs. tradition* or of *law vs. culture*. Instead, these frames are resultant strains of how multiple actors exploit public meanings by turning into "logical" normative alignments on dog-eating.

4.2.1: Consuming Dirt and the Construction of Food Epidemic

One frame that finds no presence in the on-going discussion on dog-eating is the perplexing attempt to link the practice to discourses of dirt, epidemic and violence. Perceiving dog-eating as a desecration of animal rights has been the most visible frame among NGOs but approaching it as a source of danger to public health is one tactic which they utilize to circumvent any disagreement from supporters of cultural rights. Specifically, policies on public health present an alternative apparatus to frame dog-eating by removing its relationship to other laws which codify it as an essential element of Filipino heritage. These "alternate" policies do not invoke animal welfare but they have become instrumental in assembling a coherent frame to stop dog-meat consumption. More than this, these legal instruments are reflective of how social actors navigate the gamut of policies without necessarily being guided by an assumed binaristic opposition between culture and law *or* tradition and change.

In 2007, the Philippine government has introduced the *Anti-Rabies Act* to safeguard the "right to health of Filipinos" (Official Gazette 2008) by initiating a structure for the "control, prevention and spread of human and animal rabies" (ibid) and "promoting responsible pet ownership" (ibid). Unlike the *Animal Welfare Law*, which was promulgated in 1998, the

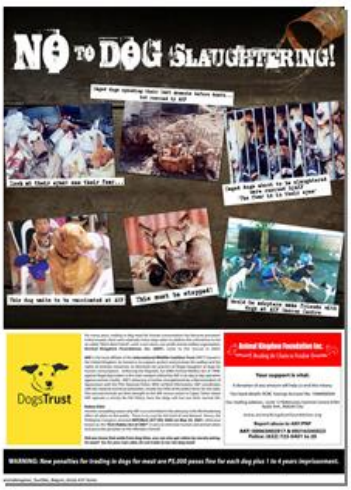
Illustration 2: AKF circulated this poster in regional papers after the passing of the Anti-Rabies Law. The texts to the left are some of the contents of the poster.

Rabies Kills!

Another compelling reason why AKF is so committed in this advocacy is the life threatening effect of rabies to the public. There is *no cure for this kind of viral disease!* Hence, the Philippine Congress enacted **REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9482 on May 25, 2007**, otherwise known as the **"Anti-Rabies Act of 2007".** It aims to eliminate human and animal rabies and prescribe penalties to the offenders thereof.

Did you know that aside from dog bites, you can also get rabies by merely eating its meat? So, for your own sake, do not trade-in nor eat dog meat!

WARNING: New penalties for trading dogs for meat are 5000 pesos for each dog plus 1 to 4 years imprisonment.



Anti-Rabies Act does not forbid dog-meat eating. Even so, animal rights groups, such as *Animal Kingdom Foundation* and *LinisGobyerno,* have re-appropriated the law and depicted dog-eating as a conduit of rabies virus (see Illustration 2)[6]. Since then, the law has criminalized dog-meat traders who violate ***not*** the Animal Welfare Law but the public's right to health and "security" from diseases.

As can be seen in the picture, one recognizes how AKF tries to relate dog-eating to rabies and indirectly expand their agenda to include pushing for public safety from epidemic. This has become even more apparent when the group has registered a complaint against two dog-meat trades in 2008 for violating the Anti-Rabies Law and not the Animal Welfare Act[7]. With this example, one identifies how social actors negotiate within a landscape of rules and regulations by building a strategic association between one policy to another. The AKF and LinisGobyerno have "stretched" the "negative" consequences of dog-eating as a desecration of animal welfare to an imminent threat to public health. In this way, animal-rights advocates have redirected their strategy by presenting the practice as a direct cause of epidemic. The Animal Kingdom Foundation and other government institutions are quick to proclaim the role of dog-eating as vector of infectious virus. A local veterinarian, for instance, has repetitively asked the community not to eat dogs as the virus could infect them. But she did not explain that the spread is not because of consumption but by the likelihood of getting bitten when one slaughters dogs. I quote,

> We may get diseases from dog meat like rabies considering that it does not pass through meat inspections conducted by our office and the National Meat Inspection Service because they know it is illegal (Dr. Brigit Piok interview by JM Alegre 2010).

Clearly, the creation of Anti-Rabies Act has delivered another legal machinery to brand dog-eating as threat to public health. This had clear impact on local policies after a number of

6 Animal Kingdom Foundation Official Webpage. 2011. Retrieved March 12, 2015 (http://www.animalkingdomfoundation.org/index.html).

7 "Dog Meat Traders Busted" Retrieved May 16, 2015 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=11&v=qVRXmXOxx9Y).

cities several towns in the Philippines promulgated regulations that framed dog-eating, not as violation of animal rights, but as a potential source of disease. In recent cases of arrest, rabies has become the organizing frame to regulate dog-meat consumption away from the "original" objective of protecting animal welfare. For example, the health officials of Digos City in Southern Philippines has decided to quarantine 21 men after the discarded head of the dog, which they slaughtered and consumed, has tested positive for rabies virus (Dinoy 2013). Even though the national office of Philippines' *Department of Health* has explained that rabies is not transmitted by consuming dog meat, NGOs like *Animal Kingdom Foundation* and *Animal Welfare Institute* have meticulously drew a link between the two and portrayed "rabies as the most serious public health hazard in the country" and dog-eating as "harmful to one's health" (*LinisGobyerno* 2006).

On first glance, such an easy shift in tactic could be interpreted as an abandonment of the group's original objective of securing animal rights. But the change from one goal to another illustrates how social actors try to assemble dog-eating into a flexible form that is then casted into different frames. This does not imply an absence of structures that guide social actions but reflective of the slippery relationship between "meanings" attributed to food and the accompanying behavior that is imputed in certain food practices. On the one hand, consuming dog-meat is a direct violation of animal welfare- a desecration of a life form that has inherent right. On the other hand, dog is ironically morphed into an entity that serves as a container of public danger, a conduit of disease and malevolence.

4.2.2: Geography of Policy: Codifying Spaces of Eating

To further elucidate the intriguing link of dog-eating to dirt and epidemic, we must also understand how NGOs codify physical spaces where consumption is embedded in specific geographies. More specifically, NGOs have redefined the physical division of city as

constitutive of how specific meat for human consumption is understood. One way to escape the opposition from cultural-right advocate is to bundle the protection of animal welfare with policies that designate spaces for slaughtering animals. In 1975, the government has enacted PD 856 (*Code of Sanitation in the Philippines*), a law that identified specific areas for abattoir. The decree has explicitly acknowledged that slaughtering animals in places situated near or within residential areas is unsanitary and poses threat to public health. Anyone who intends to construct an abattoir has to secure a sanitation permit from the national government before s/he can start building the slaughterhouse in a location far from any residential areas. Consequently, animal-rights advocates can use this law and convince the police to raid illegal slaughterhouses without "violating" the right of indigenous communities to exercise their culture. In effect, the owners of dog slaughterhouses violate the Sanitation Code and *not* the Animal Welfare Law. This "legal strategy" is exactly what members of the *Animal Kingdom Foundation* (AKF) have been deploying. In 2003, the director of AKF has registered a case against two abattoir owners who were butchering dogs for commercial purpose within a residential compound. As expected, the director has decided to use the Sanitation Code instead of invoking the Animal Welfare Law to avoid any backlash from supporters of IPRA (Indigenous Peoples Right Act). In his statement, he acknowledges the role of dog in rituals but insists on the need to protect people's health from the unsanitary practices of domestic slaughterhouses,

> This is not an overpower of the Cordillera culture where most people insist that eating dog meat is a tradition in the region. It's all about protecting the people's health from eating dog and dirty slaughterhouses (Greg Quimpo, Director of AKF)[8].

Likewise, the codification of physical landscape (i.e. residential area) and the accompanying activities associated to every space does not only permeate how *Animal Kingdom Foundation* and *LinisGobyerno* have been constructing their arguments. It also presents how the deployment of state power by local bureaucrats mirror an interesting

[8] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVRXmXOxx9Y

illustration of creative assemblage where dog-eating is positioned *vis-à-vis* sanitation. As it embodies an out-of-place practice, dog-eating becomes an anomalous source of disorder by desecrating state-sanctioned slaughterhouses. For example, this frame is reechoed by the head of the police department in Northern Philippines in an interview conducted after an entrapment operation.

> As for the raid of illegal slaughter area, usually it is not considered as a declared *slaughter area…it is an illegal slaughter because it is not allowed by the city government and this illegal slaughter area could be found in an isolated place, the camouflage is used- usually under vegetation where they butcher dogs.* These dogs come from Batangas, Laguna and Quezon. Why? Because dog in this place is more cheaper than here in Baguio…Sometimes it is warrantless search, except when the slaughtering is done inside a house, but this raid is actually represented by the sanitations of the city. *The city has a sanitation officer and he is always with us. If the raid happens in the market, we take media with us to glorify the event.* Usually the media is for the purpose of letting the people know what is illegal. Because some of the Cordillerans are claiming that is their delicacy, their food, but it should not be the case. So we have to stop the slaughter of canines (emphasis is mine).

As can be seen, the debate has moved beyond the rhetoric of animal-rights and tapped into discourses around public sanitation and health. Additionally, the lumping together of various players (e.g. sanitation officer, police, media) demonstrates how different frames could be sewn into one coherent alignment. In this way, sanitation is invoked and strategically re-encoded into domestic spaces. Again, this should not be interpreted as an abandonment of AKF's original goal, but a strategy to avoid what we have mentioned earlier about the antagonism between culture/tradition and policy. In view of the conflicting relationship of Animal Welfare Act and IPRA, AKF tries to circumvent the possibility of an impasse by bundling their advocacy to policies that complement their agenda but provide means to avoid a possible collusion with supporters of IPRA.

From another layer, the spatial codification of slaughtering takes more legitimacy in relation to how dog-eating is understood as conduit of epidemic. If these frames are sewn together, they amplify the practice into a social dilemma that is worthy of public concern. As dog-eating allows the spread of disease and as abattoirs are situated in domestic spaces,

consuming dog-meat becomes not simply a personal act but a complete violation of a community's "right" (AKF 2011) to a safer and cleaner environment. That is, the practice no longer holds claim as a cultural heritage but a floating form that poses danger to the greater public. And its fluidity is akin to a double-faced character where, on one side, it is harbinger of disease and filth, and on the other side, it denigrates the neat and clean environment of residential areas. If these two faces morph into one, it brings an even more monstrous being that wreaks havoc to people, community and public life. *It is a danger to all things pure*.

4.2.3: Mundane violent eater

Branding dog-meat consumption as a vector of disease has an implicit pedagogical undertone. For some time, *LinisGobyerno* and AKF have been supporting mass vaccination for dogs, although such efforts are not necessarily understood as a way to protect animal welfare. Instead, mass vaccination is described as a viable solution to prevent people from consuming their pets. Amidst the promotion of mass vaccination, dogs are aligned to another frame that will form part of a tripartite assemblage. Beside dirt and epidemic, the third face that dog-meat consumption has come to embody is the presumed penchant for violence among consumers. As I have described in the previous sections, the image of a violent eater has been deployed as a spring board for America's *benevolent assimilation*. The same alignment informs the contemporary debate on dog-eating but devoid of the colonial project. What transpires on its current form, however, is an interesting marriage of discourses on sanitation and epidemic to violence. *The colonial master is long dead but a new god has appeared to direct the fate of eating*. Take for instance how the following statement denies the cultural layer of dog-eating and presents it as an ordinary finger food that is imputed with cruelty.

> Dog meat is not eaten as a meal for sustenance in the Philippines, but rather as *finger food* for men to snack on during drinking binges…THERE IS *NOTHING*

> *CULTURAL* OR TRADITIONAL ABOUT THIS. IT IS A *CRUEL ACT* THAT MUST BE HALTED (Brown 2013, emphasis is mine).

There are two layers that must be dismantled at this point. On one side, the presumed mundanity renders the cultural argument mute. On the other side, the violence imputed in eating dog-meat conjures-up an image of barbarism and incivility. If taken together, the practice is a mundane form of violence that is no longer hinged on any sacred claims but on the taken-for-granted act of slaughtering and consuming dog-meat. This layer is pivotal in relation to the purported sacrality inherent in what supporters of IPRA believe to be *traditional* in dog-eating. In this regard, if one form of behavior is "detached" from its sacred foundation, it can no longer claim legitimacy as dog-eating has no validity to ground itself as symbolic representation of anything cultural or heritage. Such an understanding looms large in public debates that vilify the practice as a mundane and highly commoditized good that is devoid of any religious element.

> The only difference between the pre-war issue on dog-eating and the present, is that before our Igorot ancestors ate and butcher dogs for religious rituals. *It is not being served as a delicacy; it is not a day-to-day pulutan* (finger food). As matter of fact, the butchering and eating of dogs (then) is treated with much respect. Our Igorot ancestors believed that dogs can guard our spirits (*ab-abiik* in Kankanaey dialect). That is why when one meets an accident or witnesses death, a dog should be sacrificed so that the spirit of the dog will guard the spirit of the living to prevent the occurrence of bad luck.
>
> So, what's the big fuss about the present dog meat eating and trading?
>
> *…Dog meat eating has become a day-to-day thing, most of it consumed as pulutan (finger food). The sanctity and the religious rituals that go with dog-eating have long been gone* (Bawang 2003, emphasis is mine).

One witnesses an implicit assumption about a break in the temporal continuity of dog-eating as a traditional practice. Where before it is considered sacred, its entry as a commodity for public consumption makes the "sanctity and religious" dimension vanish thereby converting it into an outdated thing that is only committed to memory. As the practice is no longer couched within sacred grounds, the presumed banality is then coupled with violence.

Here lies the "big fuss". Slaughtering and eating dog-meat is a form of violence as it is accomplished to fulfill its sheer function as ordinary finger food- there is nothing religious, sacred and grand. This violence is understood as an absence of foundation, an entry into the world of banal and mundane (Alexander 2003). But the image of a violent eater does not only cohere around the banality or mundanity of the practice as it is now amplified and connected directly to the slaughtering of dogs. AKF and LinisGobyerno have been utilizing this frame as they describe how illegal slaughterhouses utilize blue torch and brutal force in rendering dog-meat. Hence, violence is committed in two forms: an absence of sacred foundation and the use of brutal physical force.

4.2.4: Tripartite Assemblage: Dirt, Epidemic and Violence

Before I move to the next key players of this debate, I want to reiterate what I have established so far. As I have been arguing against the propensity to situate eating as a practice that is slave to external forces, my discussion has elucidated a starkly different picture of how people understand food by stitching various ideas into an assemblage that is deployed and reworked. That is, dog-eating is not simply vilified as an anomalous practice that represents an anti-modernist stance in Philippine society. Rather, NGOs and other social actors try to compose a clean and "logical" horizon of meaning where normative definition of eating is created. In such a world, dog-meat consumption is tied with social discourses of dirt, epidemic and violence.

I opine that this triumvirate has eluded earlier attempts by other scholars, including myself, who have been working along an assumption that is either moored to a structuralist or materialist approach. Structural accounts, for instance, will easily crumble when confronted with such slippages in the presumed dirt in dogs but with an inherent animal right. In the same manner, the cultural codes that become instrumental in creating alignments find no

presence when subsumed within an analytic frame that invokes materialist analysis. Nevertheless, I do not want to suggest a gastronomic field of contestation that is devoid of power and the working of misrecognition. I will provide a discussion on this issue at the end of this paper after elucidating how supporters of dog-eating as a practice deal with the debate. In the next section, I discuss two interrelate forms of interpretive assemblage that seek to portray the practice as 1) *proper food* and 2) *an insignia of food entitlement*.

4.3: Eating my pet?

So far, I have only discussed how followers of animal welfare have created an assemblage by 1) circumventing policies and adapting their strategies and 2) creating alignments along discourses of dirt, epidemic and violence. Again, it is important to highlight how this group "abandons" their original goal of protecting animal welfare by subsuming dog-eating not as violation of Animal Welfare Law but as desecration of the public's right to sanitation and health. It might appear premature to conclude at this point but such a case illustrates how social action remains in flux as social actors resort to unpredictable and often-conflicting motivations to pursue their interests. This becomes even more apparent when we examine how supporters of dog-eating try to defend the practice not simply by resorting to arguments couched within politics of heritage and authenticity but by actively tapping into other means that might appear, on the surface, contradictory.

4.3.1: Aestheticization of eating

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, dog-eating has spiraled into a nationalist symbol that hinges on its proclaimed representation of a pure pre-colonial and pristine Filipino culture. Since the state-sponsored nationalist ripple in the 1970s, dog-eating embodies some form of anticolonial subversion that openly devalues the perpetuated

imagination of an uncivilized Philippines by becoming the gastronomic moment of how Filipinos criticize the whole eating sensibility of the old colonial master (Alegre 1988). Apart from heritagization, there is another way to make an alternative alignment constructed by groups who support dog-eating. Food aestheticization is one scheme to invert what animal welfare advocates have claimed regarding the unsanitary nature of dog-meat consumption. A widely circulated article, for example, has attracted reaction when it printed short "recipes" for preparing dog meat cuisine. I quote,

> A dog meat chef said the delicacies come in several recipes such as the common "*pulutan*" (finger food) of roasted skin and lean meat fried with onion leaves. "*Spare parts*" are the knuckles, small meat and bones boiled 'till (sic) tender, while "*pinuneg*" is a serving of intestines cleaned and stuffed with blood and spices and cooked like longganisa (meat sausage). "*Asozena*" or adobo (soy meat stew) is a preferred serving among men who do not want the dog-meat smell (Guimbatan 2007).

To my mind, the publication of these short recipes must be understood in relation to how Animal Kingdom Foundation and other NGOs have vilified dog-eating as filthy and violent. By describing dog-meat as a delicacy, not only do they endeavor to deny the presumed filth and violence inherent in the practice but to elevate it to the same level as other Filipino cuisines. On my part, I have had short interactions with restaurants in Baguio City where dog-meat is a popular meal. In all restaurants that I have visited, the menu typically includes common Filipino dish but with dog-meat as a main ingredient. For instance, the famous *adobo*, a meat stew braised in vinegar and soy sauce, is cooked using dog-meat instead of chicken and pork. In the same manner, stir-fried noodles that are traditionally prepared with poultry are cooked with minced or cubed dog-meat. Unlike other food, dishes made out of dog-meat are more expensive and have higher demand. Oftentimes, it is common to see restaurants closing early as they already run out of dog-meat to serve. To reiterate, an important frame that supporters of dog-meat have been deploying is to point the practice within the rubrics of gastronomy, often amplifying how dog-meat cuisines are not different from other dishes made out of poultry or pork.

4.3.2: Internal and External Domestication of Food Entitlement

Aside from presenting a layer of gastronomy, other key players tried to amplify the practice to another dimension. For instance, the regional head of Philippines' *Agriculture Department* in the north even extended the function of dog-eating outside its role as a ritual offering to a symbol of emotional bond. In a forum to request the government to exclude indigenous communities from the ban on dog-meat trade, Director Gerry Baliang claims that "…eating of dog meat is part of northern tribes culture, and sometimes it is a gesture of hospitality when a man butchers a dog and offers dog meat-delicacies to his visitors" (quoted from Guimbatan 2007).

Yet, the most powerful alignment that supporters have effectively employed is to recode the practice by juxtaposing it with other food practices within the Philippines and with other neighboring Asian countries. The goal of which is to articulate the double-standard that has come to define how AKF and the state treat dog-eating and to redefine the call for its recognition as an expression of human right. To facilitate my discussion, I have prematurely divided these two attempts at assemblage into *internal* and *external domestication of food entitlement*. I do not want to suggest a strict empirical division between the two but largely an analytic typology to help me elucidate my arguments. Nonetheless, the ground is murkier than what I want to portray, sometimes the neat division is rendered inutile as local frames interact with discourses from outside. The former refers to how supporters of the practice try to compare dog-eating with cock-fighting or wildlife hunting while the latter invokes practices in other countries which receive little attention of have not generated intense public discussions.

For the most part, supporters have been rallying behind the idea that dog-eating is a cultural heritage supported by the *Indigenous Peoples Rights Act* (IPRA). In this law, all practices of indigenous communities are recognized by the state as part of the country's heritage. Yet invoking heritage laws only shows one dimension of how groups try to circumvent oppositions. In fact, a more pronounced form of engagement is to tap into a relational banter that seeks to portray the double-standard inherent among advocates of animal welfare. Isikias Picpican's comment represents a sentiment that runs through all supporters of the practice. I quote,

> How can you tell to Cordillerans that dog-eating is offensive. You can't. It's only other people who are visitors to Baguio or who are *visitors to the Cordillera*, who look at dog-meat eating as offensive. Those who comment for example about the market vendors who sell meat only saw it in some British tabloids…they call that savage but which is more barbaric, is it when people engage in *gambling like for example in cock fighting, or horses, watching animal kill each other now that is cruelty.* While if you serve it as a meal to be feasted on by people that is really something…there's a reason behind why people still do it. *They have to understand that is our culture* (Isikias Picpican as quoted in Buenaobra 2009, emphasis is mine).

Based from the statement, there are two layers that constitute how supporters align dog-eating within internal discourses. *First*, animal-welfare advocates are not locals and that they impose a foreign standard to the Philippines. *Second*, this standard is extremely selective as it does not make issue of other practices that could be categorized as a violation of animal welfare. To my mind, these two layers try to delocalize the practice by asserting how concerns over animal-welfare has no root in Philippine society and the proclivity to translate dog-eating as animal cruelty is, in itself, preposterous because advocates do not oppose the more popular cock-fighting in lowland Philippines or horse-fighting in the South. Such has been the contour of public debates since the promulgation of the Animal Welfare Law. Key players have voiced out the apparent double-standard that demonize dog-eating as "cruelty" (Afable 2004) but does not consider other practices as violation of the Animal Welfare Act.

In a public forum that was organized in 2007 in Baguio City, these frames took an anti-colonial layer, which is reminiscent of how dog-eating was morphed into a nationalist symbol in the 1970s. Local politicians organized the gathering as a reaction to a series of arrests directed against restaurant owners who served delicacies made from dog-meat (Guimbatan 2007). The same frame has been articulated but not directed against a colonial master but to foreigners who visited the country and started to castigate the practice. Thus, realigning the opposition to dog-eating is accomplished by pointing its origin from outside and not within the Philippines. This accounts why, according to Picpican, animal welfare advocates are selective of their agenda of policing dog-meat consumption but turning a blind eye to cock and horse fighting. And so, for supporters, dog *is* a local food in the Philippines but only transmogrified into an insignia of barbarity by foreigners who try to impose their selective standards.

Similarly, invoking practices of other countries become instrumental in repositioning dog as food in Philippine culture. As the former tries to align the practice with horse-fighting in Southern Philippines, the latter form of alignment expands the debate to reframe dog-eating as an expression of human rights protected by an international legal principle. Also, as supporters note how animal-rights advocates are hypocritical by ignoring other contentious practices within the Philippines, they too utilize contentious food practices of other countries. Cecil Afable, a former city mayor of Baguio, has written a scathing remark against NGOs supported by foreign donors to pursue their dog-saving agenda,

> *Dogs are Man's Best Friend. But they can also be raised for food for the gods and the people.* The International Body Group, who are complaining against dog trade in our areas, should go to *Taiwan and Korea*, where dog meat is a daily fare to them. It is a *national delicacy*. Eating dog meat to us is part of our *culture* and we do not tolerate anybody especially a *foreign supported group to come and legislate against our culture*. It is a *human right and we can take this up against them to the United Nations as a violation*. Even our legislators who try to prohibit the eating of dogs are eating them. The *British used their dogs to hunt and kill other animals—and they pay other people to save dogs* (Afable 2004, emphasis is mine).

Afable's remark represents how supporters try to juxtapose the practice with other eating practices in the region (Korea and China) and how they employ international policies (i.e. *Universal Declaration of Animal Rights*) to support what they claim as a violation of human rights. From within the Philippines, they contrast the practice with other contentious food to articulate how animal-rights advocates are selective of their motives. In addition, they also use cases from other countries like dog-eating in Korea and Taiwan to emphasize the status of dog-meat consumption as an accepted delicacy. What is more interesting to highlight in Afable's remark is an interesting reversal of claim in which supporters do not plainly treat the opposition as an abject violation of human rights but emphasized more on the presence of similar contentious practices in Britain (i.e. using dogs for hunting). This interesting "reversal" of claims runs synonymous to how animal-rights advocates in the Philippines fail to see cock-fighting as a violation of animal welfare but insist on the presumed "barbarity" (Bawang 2003) in dog-meat consumption.

4.3.3: Assembling food and politics of culture

These two forms of reversal have played critical role in the current debate on contentious food practices and animal rights. By "localizing" and "expanding" their claims to support dog-eating and to demonstrate the selective standard that permeates the advocacy of animal welfare advocates, I see a strategic re-assembling of dog-eating as an expression of human rights. On the one hand, dog-eating as an entitlement to food is deployed behind legal principles, thereby transforming it into an insignia of right. On the other hand, invoking culture takes another layer that goes beyond legal principles and invokes culture as "immediate" reason why the practice must be protected from foreigners.

This attempt to oscillate between an invocation of right that is supported by local or international law and the immediate call for recognition of Filipino culture describes how

supporters of the practice strategically deploy their position. It also presents an interesting illustration of how "human rights" is bundled into two levels- backed by legal principle and what I call as politics of cultural immediacy. On one layer, eating dog-meat is translated into an entitlement to food as stipulated in the Indigenous Peoples Right Act. In this way, it becomes a legal battle between Animal Welfare Law and the IPRA. However, this takes to different realm of discourse on right when cultural protection from "foreigners" is invoked as an immediate concern for the government. This, to a large degree, goes beyond the use of laws as springboard for claims when human right is embedded in "culture". Right to food becomes not merely an issue that is interspersed within legal frames but is taken to a dimension that is synonymous to a humanitarian discourse. *In short, for supporters, dog-eating is a human right because it is cultural.*

What have I argued so far? Supporters of the practice have aligned the debate along different portals of meaning that straddle from food aesthetics to food entitlement. To invert the discourse of filth and violence, they have bundled up dog-eating to local and international laws to paint a practice that is legally permissible while calling attention to the selective attitude of animal welfare advocates who turn a blind to other contentious food practices but only castigate the consumption of dog in the Philippines. More than this, they seek to put forward an argument that locates the practice as an expression of human right supported by IPRA and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights *or* by simply foregrounding it as an immediate manifestation of right to culture.

4.4: So what? Strategic bundling and assemblage

In an article written by Webb Keane (2003) on the continuing appropriation of *batik* in Indonesian history, he introduces the concept *semiotic bundling* to explain how the "relative value, utility, and relevance" (p. 414) of things shift when users bundle them to other objects.

In the same manner, this is how I view the social life of food. On one side, food can be read as "slave" to imposing structures that serve as discursive sites to propagate certain forms of "proper" eating habit. Such abstract words as animal welfare and cultural rights assume some level of symbolic coercion as they are converted into influential legal codes that define how individuals should "treat" dogs, either as pet or as food. In the literature of food studies, such analysis reflects the first two strands of analytic framework that we have discussed in the earlier part of this essay. Harris and Sahlins look for explanations outside food, in the material condition of production and deep structures. These approaches are critical examinations of how external elements define how people interpret their eating-habit. It is not surprising if concepts like *class and structure* become crucial analytic tools to explain how misrecognition functions in social analysis.

But this proclivity to juxtapose the meaning that we attribute to food as a cultural moment, which is homologous to an external reality, omits an important feature of social analysis. To my mind, short-circuiting how we interpret food as mirror-reflection of abstract reality (i.e. discourse, class) is almost tantamount to a weak analysis or tautology. In such analytic proclivity, the contour of peoples' reaction to dog-eating is merely reflective of bigger discourses that hover over them and deploy pre-reflexive interpretations. Although this approach has given powerful tool to understand dog-eating, it could not, in my opinion, account the creative act of NGOs and state bureaucrats who fuse (and defuse) frames, meanings and policies. It can elucidate the deployment of animal-rights as a coercive frame but it is unable to explain how and why they draw links among disease, epidemic, sanitation and eating. Everything is easily assumed as consequence of state authority but the exact translation of *Animal Welfare Laws* in relation to the *Sanitation Code* and *Anti-Rabies Act* is absent.

On the other hand, dog-eating could be understood as an assemblage that is both contingent and an emergent process. This is particularly apparent in how policies and discourses on dog-eating are created and utilized by key stake-holders. While policies limit action, people can actively deploy them to achieve and circumvent their own restrictions. As we have discussed, the problematic relationship between tradition and animal welfare pushes advocates to decouple and bundle their advocacy from one law to another, from Animal Welfare Law to Sanitation Code and Anti-Rabies Act. Undeniably, social actors have strategically bundled laws and meanings to their advantage. Dispersed and unrelated discourses of filth, violence and epidemic are sewn together to make a logical alignment where dog-meat consumptions is understood as an anomaly. They mobilize various views that are, to some extent, unrelated to food but become social webs that are openly pulled together to form a web of associated meaning- an assemblage that sets boundaries around dog-eating. Sanitation, space and violence are taken within one frame in an attempt to convert dog-eating into a practice that is isolated to food and consumption. Similarly, re-coding the practice under the umbrella of entitlement through local and international legal principles present an interesting bricolage where food is creatively bundled with human rights. In here, the expression of right becomes something that could be associated with eating or that the character which constitutes food is extended to a delicious dog stew or a noodle with minced canine meat. In the end, the way people understand food is a formless entity that only assumes a certain level of solidity when disparate and diverging elements are assembled together as ingredients for a social recipe of eating.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

The key to understanding any social phenomenon is to follow how actors tread the social landscape and describe how they form groups, fuse meanings, and create associations of different frames. Such has been the objective of this thesis- to describe how specific actors have been assembling various discourses to make sense of dog-eating. More specifically, NGOs such as *LinisGobyerno* and Animal Kingdom Foundation (AKF) produce assemblages that align dog-eating with discourses on dirt, violence and disease. From the other camp, supporters of the practice try to invert these claims by juxtaposing dog-meat consumption as an entitlement that is protected by both local and international laws. Furthermore, to provide stronger counterclaims, the practice is also elevated as *food* that sits alongside other Filipino cuisines.

In analytic level, my analysis engages with existing scholarship on dog-eating by providing an alternative reading which taps into Latour's framework. I argue that previous engagements on dog-eating is unable to deal with the quotidian modes through which actors bundle the practice with multiple frames. Rather than presupposing how people make sense of food as inflections of deep binary-oppositions or an epiphenomenon of productive forces, I opine that one must change gear and refocus on how actors themselves understand contentious food practices by following their actions. This is best accomplished by tracing how they create a coherent assemblages by associating food with other social elements. In this thesis, I unpack how contradictory discourses on dirt, violence, human rights, food entitlement and aesthetics are woven together by NGOs as they engage in a social banter with other actors. In this process, the supposed antagonism between culture and modernity becomes an overly simplistic framework to understand dog-eating as actors navigate and build symbolic associations that are beyond what is deemed traditional or legal. In the same

light, subsuming the practice as a result of poverty or economic condition only offers a limited explanation given the presence of cultural codes that have come to define dog-eating as an icon of/for various discourses.

Nevertheless, I do not want to paint a picture of a utopian field of interaction where actors have equal capital to engage in social banter. However, the presence of an unequal field only emerges as actors participate with others in a network of relationship. What is perhaps crucial for any analysis is not to commence the description of actors' behavior as if they are slaved to prevailing structural conditions. Rather, a sociological investigation of food must begin from a *flat social world*. This means is that we must follow the actors themselves as they move through social grooves of class or inequality and fissures from imposing hegemony or ideology.

Lastly, as it is almost habitual in any academic endeavor to articulate one's future direction, the concept of assemblage promises a new way to understand other contentious food practices. For instance, Japan's whaling practice is an interesting case to illustrate how nationalist and "anti-colonial" rhetoric are bundled with eating. In the same light, food scandal like the current food scare over Maggi noodles in India or Europe's reaction over fake horsemeat in 2013 present startling examples of how eating is assembled along diverse lines e.g. race, ethnicity, caste and oriental imagination.

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