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Post-Assignment

As a college student who has only been active in the environmental nonprofit space for a little more than three years, it was both an intimidating and highly inspiring experience to partake in the ProSPER.NET Leadership Programme with much more established movers and shakers across Asia-Pacific. To manage others' expectations, I would insert in my introduction how I was a "baby to climate action". But through engaging with other participants in the activities, I slowly warmed up to this energetic space, and came to capitalize on my background in creative communication and youth engagement. While in the motions of my extracurricular work with Wavefarers, a Filipino environmental youth organization, I knew I was just trying my best to contribute how I could with my time and talents. I only realized through this program how this work was building me a toolkit of expertise in climate education and communication, which I could share with my groupmates during the program, and the broader Filipino environmental movement after it. It is in this thought, along with the frameworks and tools I picked up from the Programme, that I lay out what is next for my journey in climate action.

Though currently based in Japan doing a liberal arts undergraduate program, I have been really passionate about my remote work with Wavefarers as its Public Relations Chair. Through social media communications and sustainable educational projects, our organization's goal is to empower Filipino youth in climate action. As Public Relations Chair for over a year, I direct the promotion of campaigns and events, and oversee day-to-day social media management and publicity material creation. I also train our Marketing and Creatives Committee members in climate communication skills. Climate issues are especially "wicked" problems in the Philippine context, from the need for disaster risk, reduction, and management to stopping development aggression from threatening mega-biodiversity. Professor Rickards during her keynote presentation explained how our chances against climate change rely on taking on "transformational adaptation" with the same force and speed as climate change itself, which calls for broad and far-reaching environmental movements. In light of this, I believe it would be more efficient and impactful for me to exert my energy scaling our organization's initiatives for at least another half year as Public Relations Chair. Beyond Wavefarers and possible similar work in the environmental nonprofit scene, I also hope to continue my academic journey studying environmental anthropology in the Philippine context.

The short and long term plan that follows has this in mind, but I recognize that any good climate action plan has to be done in consultation and collaboration with many others, from those in my organization, to our partners. Thus, I have to commit to advocating my plan to encourage people to adopt my vision, or better, to build onto my own.

Within the next year, I want to train other organization members in design thinking and systems thinking to be able to understand our role in the Philippine environmental scene. I can do this by conducting workshops where I share frameworks picked up from the program, especially on understanding climate risk and impacts. With the Projects Committee, training in this kind of

thinking can help them to pitch and refine projects that are feasible and sustainable for the beneficiaries and the systems they move within. I am especially excited to support and promote our project called Paminaw, where intimate small group discussions are organized between high school students and environmental defenders, for students to get to know firsthand how environmental issues are felt and struggled against. With face-to-face classes possibly resuming next year, this program can reach more students who may not be receiving quality formal science education.

I am hoping to double down on refining climate communication strategies within Public Relations; from planning publication releases monthly just based on what environmental issues are relevant, I want to have a more intentional communication strategy. This will start with asking ourselves what is climate education and action for the Filipino youth: how does climate intersect with the experiences and struggles of young Filipinos? From an awareness of climate change or environmental issues from formal science lessons, class suspensions during typhoons, or visiting plastic-bag strewn coastlines, how might we empower youth to claim a better future for themselves through climate action? Once we figure out how climate relates to our audience and what hinders them from taking action, we can experiment with incorporating the energy and talents of youth into meaningful engagement, through different mediums and platforms, like educational videos on Tiktok (which we are currently attempting!). This kind of upskilling in climate communication will hopefully expand our social media reach to more areas in the Philippines, a reach we can loop into long-term engagement through the network of high school or local environmental clubs we are building. As national elections in May 2022 approach, we can campaign for the inclusion of climate solutions in candidates' agendas and platforms, while also incorporating voter's education.

My long term strategy for the organization takes from the momentum of climate communication and network building started in the first year. The goal would be to make climate education widely accessible and climate action approachable, empowering Filipino youth to lead climate action in their own communities. Climate change has very localized impacts, so a decentralized environmental movement where young leaders are empowered to manage local situations with site-specific strategies and knowledge would be most effective. Having young people on the forefront of climate action, as global climate strikes have done, could urge more wide-reaching formalized action by the public and private sector. By looping in our student network in climate education initiatives like Paminaw, we could activate environmental clubs to join broader region-based campaigns, tackle their own community's environmental matters, or even enjoin their local government units to implement the Philippines' already brilliant environmental laws or climate plans. Such a kind of strategy would require steady climate communication, the foundation of which should be laid in the first year.

I hope to support this kind of long term strategy either by being involved in communications or network building, which can be enhanced by my academic journey. In the next three years, I am thinking of engaging in an ethnographic study of a Filipino community asserting their right to livelihood, culture, or environment, against touted development projects. This line of research can hopefully inform me of dynamics between different actors, and how ideas of sustainable

development or climate action can be invoked and acted upon. It will also allow me to get to know more Filipino environmental and social movements, and exchange knowledge about working with communities for social change. On the side, as a writer, I want to maintain a blog where I share my own experiences and insights on climate action and leadership, either in essay, or in poetry, a literary form I enjoy experimenting with. In this way of being open about my journey as an environmental advocate and communicator, I can perhaps reach others who share my same struggles and anxieties to think and go about their work differently.

The possibilities of action and collaboration against climate change have really been expanded by my experience in the ProSPER.Net Leadership Programme, so I only have optimism and motivation going forward with these plans.