

## In Dishonor of: The Assemblage of Counter-Memory as Networked Resistance on Twitter

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This study investigates the performance of counter-memory in the intersection of networked publics, counter-discourses, and technologies of memories. We map the social network and analyze the discursive practices of the Twitter hashtag network #ArawNgMagnanakaw (“Day of Thieves”) as a counter-commemoration of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. We theorize the “assemblage of counter-memory” as the connective, discursive, and material assemblage that has the capacity to privilege subjugated knowledge, reconstruct history, and shape the trajectories of reality. It acts as a counter-structure to the order of knowledge of history, built on the substructure rendered by the affordances of digital media. We argue that the assemblage enacts a kind of “relational” agency that emerges and reemerges to resist both established historical orders and systematic political manipulation. More importantly, it can reconfigure itself to respond to new issues and contexts and weave counter-memory practices with contemporary forms of political participation.

*Keywords: counter-memory, history, assemblage, mediatization, social movements, disinformation*

When institutions fail to sanction the past and history is contested, memory becomes susceptible to political manipulation. In the Philippines, the public memory of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. has been whitewashed by narratives distorting and denying his two decades of authoritarian rule, theft of billions of public funds, and the torture and murder of thousands (Aguilar, 2019). On their return from exile after the regime’s downfall in 1986, the Marcos family regained political power and mobilized the rehabilitation of their patriarch’s legacy through propaganda books, print media, and heritage sites (Limpin, 2021). The Marcoses catapulted back to the mainstream in 2016 with their alliance with authoritarian leader Rodrigo Duterte, who decreed the burial of the late Marcos in the country’s Heroes’ Cemetery. Massive social mobilization followed, with the rallying cry #MarcosNotAHero (Arguelles, 2017). Researchers and journalists

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have also identified entrenched disinformation networks that popularize historical revisionist accounts of Marcos and his regime on social media (Mendoza, 2019; Soriano & Gaw, 2022). In 2020, Congress legitimized the reverence for the dictator through the legislation of “Marcos Day” to commemorate his birth anniversary (House Bill No. 7137, 2020). In response, the Twitter hashtag network #ArawNgMagnanakaw (“Day of Thieves”) performed its counter-commemoration of Marcos, gaining prominence in digital and mainstream media (Figure 1). The hashtag was once again circulated on the same day in the following years (2021–2023), and similar online countermovements emerged with the dictator’s son, Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. winning the presidency in the 2022 Philippine elections.



**Figure 1. #ArawNgMagnanakaw tops the Philippines’ trending list on September 21, 2020, the commemoration day of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. (Rappler, 2020).**

The case of #ArawNgMagnanakaw illustrates how digital media facilitate the negotiation of memory by new actors in contexts and forms outside established historical traditions. History has exclusively been within the purview of elite institutions and groups who have the power to determine which narratives are entrenched in public memory through formal commemorations, ritualized practices, and historical artifacts (Foucault, 1977; Hoskins, 2009; Nora, 1989). Conventions of remembrance are normalized through performance in mass media, which serve as technologies of memories (Van House & Churchill, 2008) to embody the politics of the dominant mnemonic regime. Digital media disrupt and transform these forms of memory making by enabling participatory, connective, and mediatized practices through their new materialities and social conditions (Brown & Hoskins, 2010; Liu, 2018; Reading, 2011). Contemporary political movements have been documented to have capitalized on digital technology affordances in scrutinizing and rewriting oppressive historical narratives that preserve cultures of impunity against minorities and marginalized (Bosch, 2017; Merrill, Keightley, & Daphi, 2020; Smit, Heinrich, & Broersma, 2018). Digital media have also been exploited by political actors to pervert and weaponize the past to advance political agenda and undermine democratic processes, such as in the case of the presidential campaign of Marcos Jr. in the Philippines (Allington, 2017; Kozachenko, 2019; Soriano & Gaw, 2022). In both instances, digital media as technologies of memory not only alter memory formation but also reconfigure power relations in memory construction.

Engaging the concept of counter-memory (Foucault, 1977), this study examines how digital media set the conditions to perform alternative, creative, and subversive ways of remembering in resistance to prevailing historical and political structures. We locate contemporary counter-memory work in the intersection of networked publics, counter-discourses, and technologies of memories in our investigation of the hashtag network #ArawNgMagnanakaw ("Day of Thieves") on Twitter using social network analysis (SNA) and discourse analysis. We theorize the "assemblage of counter-memory" as the connective, discursive, and material assemblage that has the capacity to privilege subjugated knowledge, reconstruct history, and shape the trajectories of reality. It acts as a counter-structure to the order of knowledge of history, built on the substructure rendered by the affordances of digital media. We argue that the assemblage enacts a kind of "relational" agency that emerges and reemerges to resist both established historical orders and systematic political manipulation as well as reconfigure itself to respond to new issues and contexts.

This research lies in the intersection of memory studies, social movement studies, media studies, and disinformation studies, which are focused on problematizing the structural mediatization of memory in the new media ecology (Brown & Hoskins, 2010). Unlike disinformation campaigns that primarily refute facts and fabricate evidence, the systematic reconstruction of public memory is a long-game influence operation that co-opts political resentment into political imaginaries based on perverted narratives of a glorious past. This has been the case in Donald Trump's whitewashing U.S.' racist past in his "Make America Great Again" slogan (Hughey & Rosino, 2022), Bosnian Serb president Milorad Dodik denying the Bosnian genocide (Barton Hronešová, 2022), and similar political platforms based on false nostalgia. The assemblage of counter-memory functions as an analytical framework to map contemporary memory work against these political influence operations through the narratives of diverse marginalized groups, political movements, and ad hoc social formations.

### **Technology of Memory**

Technologies of memory, or those that capture, store, and retrieve information about events, mediate what is being remembered and how events are commemorated (Sturken, 2008). Societies' ability to capture and store memory has grown exponentially—from records of everyday conversation (through e-mail and other forms of direct messaging) to everyday action (through wearable technologies and surveillance cameras)—and such records are constantly subjected to “technical, institutional, and political decisions” (Van House & Churchill, 2008, p. 296). What is remembered is based on what can be captured, stored, and retrieved; and what is captured, stored, and retrieved is determined and shaped by the constantly changing social and technical practices in the media.

The expansion and evolution of technologies of memory enhance a group's skills and expand resources needed for commemoration, known as mnemonic capacity (Armstrong & Crage, 2006); at the same time, the shift to digital media technologies of memory has altered the very practice of remembering—facilitating the new commemorative practices from individual to the public, from personal to collaborative (Reading, 2011; Van House & Churchill, 2008). While memories may have been produced by individuals for personal use, they are mobilized and dispersed to and by the global publics to new sites and different contexts. In new media environments, memories are subjected to digitization processes, which involve the translation of human memory to binary code and intermediation through the “unseen social relations of protocols, algorithms, and database” (Reading, 2011, p. 242).

The networked mediation of memory has also called for the shift from the “collective” discourse in memory studies to a perspective in “connective” memory work, highlighting the dynamics of connectivity (i.e., accessibility, ubiquity, and velocity) in the construction of memory in digital technologies of memory (Brown & Hoskins, 2010). For Brown and Hoskins (2010), memory work in digital media takes place within the “new memory ecology” (p. 94), in which memory is constructed through the constantly shifting logic of digital media as well as the socio-technical and sociocultural practices involved when people engage with these technologies. As memories become mediatized within this new ecology, their malleability becomes more apparent; memories can be potentially reconstructed and transformed in an infinite number of ways by anybody who has access to digital technologies (Hoskins, 2009). Van Dijck (2011) argues that the centrality of digital networks in contemporary memory work makes its constituting agency “both technological and human” (p. 402). With the participatory culture of new media, the opportunity to (re)construct memories is opened to nontraditional actors, challenging the “monopoly on the mechanisms of memory production held by authorities” (Liu, 2018, p. 1688). At the same time, as alternative accounts are brought to the fore, digital media as a technology of memory can aggregate these alternative and counter-memories through its networked design, and in doing so, connect previously dispersed individuals with silenced, isolated, or marginalized experiences and allow them to participate in the construction of memories that diverge from and even challenge elite narratives (Liu, 2018). Creative memorialization practices also demonstrate the emancipatory potential of new technologies of memory by harnessing their networked design and the vast volumes of data made available to users in digital media. New technologies have facilitated new forms of activism that enable grassroots activists to employ innovative tactics in advancing their vindications. These strategies can involve the use of online, large data to assess available information and present current issues using empirical data, employ hashtags to unite others in

conversations, and create antiestablishment memes and other user-generated content that reference memories and events to delegitimize political regimes (Chenou & Cepeda-Másmela, 2019; Makhortykh & González Aguilar, 2020).

### **Post-Authoritarian Memory Politics**

In the years after the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) revolution, which ousted the Marcos dictatorship, the post-authoritarian Philippine government scrambled to institutionalize the horrors of the era and prevent Marcos' allies from regaining political power. "Never again" served as the battle cry that unified the subjective positions espoused by different actors involved in this institutionalization of memory. However, tensions among competing interests on what and how the Marcos regime should be remembered gave rise to cleavages among the groups that played significant roles in the ouster. Some of these tensions stemmed from the alleged bias against organized labor movements and toward elite interests in the concentrated efforts to memorialize martial law resistance (Claudio, 2010). Evidently, post-dictatorship efforts have been unsuccessful in sanctioning a collective memory that considers the different roles played by various actors, such as the Left, and its deference to elite interests post-EDSA has rendered alternative histories and narratives invisible.

The immediate post-EDSA administrations also failed to live up to the expectations of the social and economic prosperity of Filipinos. Instead, the Philippines saw the "reinvigoration of the old ruling elite" as the government sequestered crony assets and transferred them to oligarchic families (Moratilla, 2019, p. 6). The discourse of democracy and human rights and the "common victimhood" narrative (Claudio, 2010) that sustained the anti-Marcos movement in the early post-EDSA years became unrelatable to Filipinos, whose depressing economic realities have become more salient than concerns of preventing the Marcoses and their allies from taking over (Bello, 2017). Indeed, the memory of EDSA has become reconstructed as an event that restored democracy for the elite (Arguelles, 2017), and "never again" has become empty rhetoric. Authoritarian nostalgia has also become apparent through Filipinos' ambivalent characterization of democracy as "freedom [that] needs restraint," which manifests a desire for stronger leadership and greater discipline (Webb, 2021, p. 3). These social and economic conditions facilitated the rise of President Duterte, who portrayed himself as an "outsider-elite" (Curato, 2017) and resolved to dismantle and devalue the legacies of EDSA and the elite democracy it espoused. By promoting public amnesia over collective remembering (Arguelles, 2017), Duterte, allied with elites marginalized by the EDSA regime such as the Marcoses, neutralized the interests of the ruling elite and propelled the Marcos family's return to power.

Alongside political alliances that have enabled the whitewashing of the public memory of Marcos in textbooks and sanctioned the burial of the dictator in the Heroes' Cemetery, new technologies of memory within such a political context have played a pivotal role in the resurgence of the Marcos family. Facebook propaganda pages and YouTube political influencers fabricate myths and falsehoods about the socioeconomic conditions and political atrocities of the era (Mendoza, 2019; Soriano & Gaw, 2022). These disinformation networks seeded manipulative narratives that promoted the Marcoses as the "victims" of elite institutions such as the media and the academe, turned politically charged topics into non-politicized

narratives by packaging them as entertainment and Internet subcultures, and persuaded the public to start "moving on" instead of "remembering" the past (Ong, 2022; Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Ong & Cabbuag, 2022).

The public memory of the Marcoses based on the institutional history established post-dictatorship has been upended by the mnemonic regime of Duterte, and now of President Marcos Jr. His political message of "Rising up again" ("*Babangon Muli*") is emblematic of institutionalizing the revised legacy of his father. His commemoration of the People Power Revolution that ousted the dictator has become an opportunity for "reconciliation to those with different political persuasions" (Galvez, 2023, para. 1). The Department of Education recently revised history textbooks to refer to the era not as "Marcos dictatorship" but simply as "dictatorship" (Chi, 2023). Amidst these political maneuvers, counter-memory movements have been present in opposition to this systematic erasure of the brutality and hardships of the Marcos era.

### **Counter-Memory Assemblage**

Counter-memory is a critical concept in problematizing contemporary practices of remembrance. Originating from the work of Foucault (1977, 2003), counter-memory is the resistance to history as established, propagated, and institutionalized by dominant social groups. It views history not as a coherent, linear, and logical account but as an "unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath" (Foucault, 1977, p. 146). As such, the control over "official" history is a constant power play among social groups, and in the case of the Marcos regime, among dominant social groups using established apparatuses of remembrance. Within the disunities and discontinuities of elite history are "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, 2003) of marginalized groups, silenced narratives, and objectionable mnemonic practices. Subjugated knowledges struggle for recognition and contend for power to shape historical trajectories by "resisting the 'omissions' and distortions of official histories" and "returning to lost voices and forgotten experiences" (Medina, 2011, p. 13). These rejected mnemonic devices become counter-memory when they produce "epistemic friction" (Medina, 2011) as they rise through the crevices of history and destabilize the power relations that built and maintained the dominant historical order.

Counter-memory has been integrated into the vocabulary of memory studies in characterizing the memory work performed by marginalized communities to reassert their historical accounts into public memory using archiving and activism (Gutman, 2017; Kidman & O'Malley, 2020). Digital media provide the concept a newfound relevance by enabling users to materialize and magnify memories and experiences of oppression and injustice that fuel the politics of contemporary social movements (Bosch, 2017; Merrill et al., 2020; Smit et al., 2018). History is also being rewritten through connective memory, where the networked structure of social media facilitates the connections among public articulations of the self to form ad hoc social mobilizations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Liu, 2018; Merrill et al., 2020). In these cases, we argue that the locus of counter-memory construction is disproportionately located in community practices, discursive movements, or media technologies. These analyses surface different forms of resistance but neglect to recognize how counter-memory renders power to the undermining of historical truth that is "hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history" (Foucault, 1977, p. 144). We present our theoretical intervention through the concept of assemblage to underline counter-memory as a force that can breach the dominance of history in the structure of knowledge.

Originating from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), assemblage (or *agencement* in French) refers to the "multiplicity of heterogeneous objects, whose unity comes solely from the fact that these items function together, that they 'work' together as a functional entity" (Patton, 1994, p. 158). It is constituted not by the assortment of bodies, materials, and affect but from a set of relations that emerges as they interact and intersect in the assemblage. The configurations of the elements, therefore, forge the meaning, capacity, and trajectory of the assemblage (Nail, 2017). Memory, unlike history, functions as an assemblage as new evidence, experiences, and performances perpetually shape its forms. In the same way, the assemblage draws from its constitutive heterogeneous relations to disrupt existing power relations in memory construction. In this article, we illustrate the dynamics of the assemblage of counter-memory and how they reconstitute political agency through our empirical analysis of networked actors, suppressed discourses, and subversive practices to defy the systematic revision of history.

### Methodology

Examining the phenomenon from an assemblage perspective required a mixed-method approach to inquiry. This entailed understanding the heterogeneous elements comprised of digital agents, objects, and processes as they are consolidated by and structured within the hashtag #ArawNgMagnanakaw.

Our data were collected using the tool NodeXL, which extracts Twitter posts using the platform's application programming interface. We extracted a total of 18,067 public tweets from 8,897 users posted from September 2 to 13, 2020, that contained #ArawNgMagnanakaw or linked (as a reply) to a post that contained it. We categorized these users into different user types using publicly declared information on Twitter profiles and public data on search engines based on their declared professional backgrounds, institutional affiliations, sectoral representation, and other emergent categories.

Apart from identifying the users' backgrounds, we also identified the interactions existing among users based on tweet content to derive their participation in memory construction: Amplification (those that share other people's posts directly with their network), collaboration (those that agree with and supplement others' posts), contestation (those that challenge or contradict others' posts), negotiation (those that compromise with and clarify others' posts), and referencing (tweets that include others' posts as reference material).

We performed SNA to characterize the structure and dynamics between and among individual users tweeting #ArawNgMagnanakaw. The focus of analysis in SNA is on individuals' position and location within the network, and influence is calculated based on how central individual nodes are relative to the rest of the network. We calculated each actor's degree centrality, which refers to the total amount of connections a node has to other nodes. We also examined the formation of communities within the network using the Clauset-Newman-Moore algorithm. We then visualized the network using Gephi, color coding the nodes based on user categorization, and sizing each node based on centrality.

To examine the next layers of heterogeneous elements in the assemblage, we analyzed #ArawNgMagnanakaw tweets through Jones, Chik, and Hafner's (2015) analytical lens of discourse as digital practices. This approach emphasizes the inextricable relationship between textual digital data and their contexts of use, analyzed as "assemblages" of actions involving tools associated with digital technologies...

reproducing particular sets of social relationships” (Jones et al., 2015, p. 3). We performed discourse analysis by juxtaposing the text and context of the tweets with their corresponding actions and interactions in each community and then examined the emergent power relations between them as they “create certain ‘versions of reality’” (Jones et al., 2015, p. 4). Specifically, we identified the multimodal expressive and material elements used in the commemorative tweets, surfaced creative uses of digital objects, tools, and technologies, and probed into the different strategies employed by users. We then constructed the counter-memory discourses in the assemblage in their entanglement with key discursive components detached or deviating from dominant historical narratives as well as characterized the counter-memory practices in reference to conventional commemorative practices and the platform vernaculars of Twitter.

### **Mapping the Assemblage of Counter-Memory**

The counter-memory assemblage forms two major discourses that stand against the prevailing rewritten history of the Marcos regime. The first is the performative response to historical revisionism by opposing, rectifying, and augmenting narratives about the dictator’s legacy. Against the stature of a “hero” portrayed by his allies and supporters, users address Marcos as a “dictator,” a “murderer,” a “kleptocrat,” and even a “Hitler-wanna-be.” The tweets exhaustively refute the revisionist narratives by drawing documentary evidence from books, reports, and records that emphasize that “the whole world knows” of the severe social, economic, and political conditions of the Marcos era, with its widespread crises of “malnutrition,” “poverty,” “killing,” and “robbery.” Users oppose the manufactured adoration of Marcos and nostalgia for the “Golden age of the Philippines” (personal communication, September 11, 2020) and his government with undisguised expressions of “anger” and “disgust” not only toward the Marcoses but also their supporters and with feelings of “fright” and “shock” of the brutality of the regime (“*nakakagalit, nakaksuklam, nakakatakot, nakakagimbal*”; personal communication, September 11, 2020).

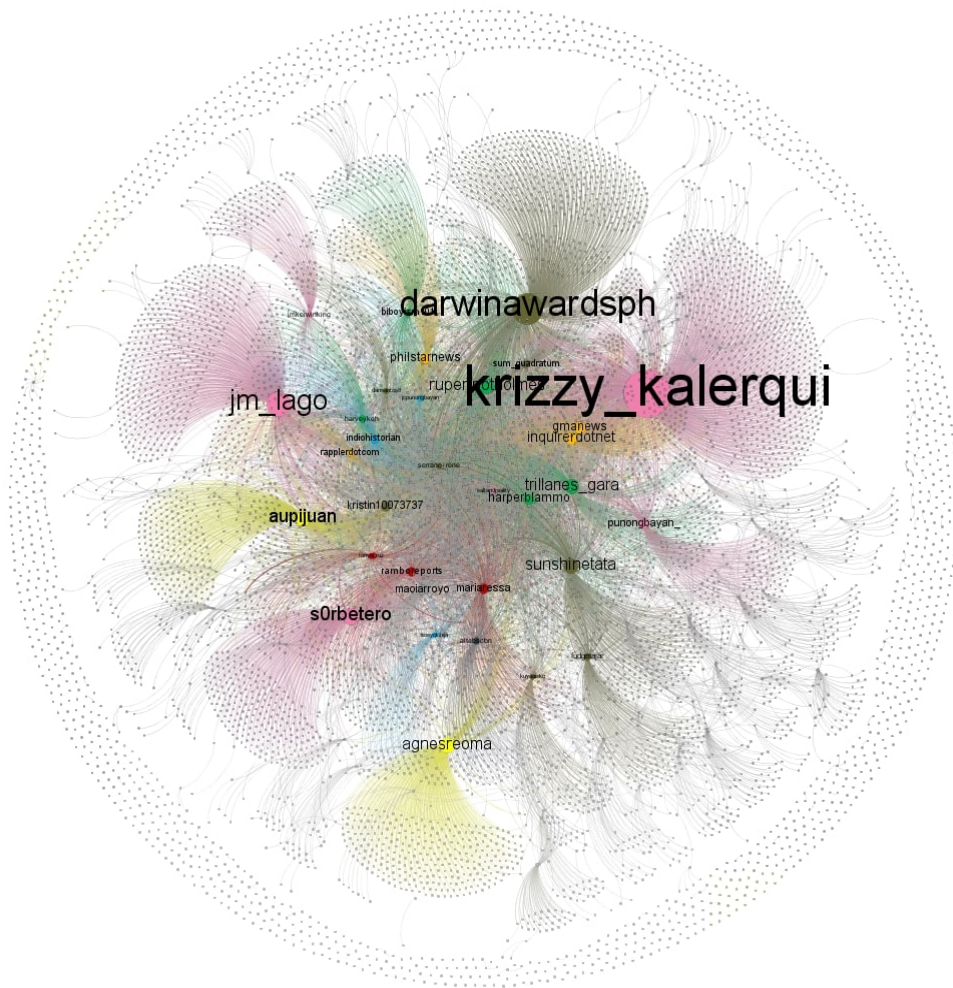
The second discursive thread is the temporal relocation of the discourse from the past to the present. Users reappropriate the hashtag #ArawNgMagnanakaw to include political figures also deemed to be “thieves” in their commemoration. Tweets involve the whole Marcos family as part of the historical embezzlement of public funds during the authoritarian rule, President Duterte and his allies, as well as indicted corrupt politicians such as former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and senator Ramon Revilla Jr.; the latter two are officeholders again. Users also emphasize the consequences of the rehabilitation of Marcos’ legacy, asserting that the “Marcoses are still in power, and celebrated by enablers, fanatics, and apologists” (personal communication, September 11, 2020) because of the rampant distortion of history. Moreover, they highlight the “utmost dangers of forgetting” (“*Walang simpanganib ang paglimot*”; personal communication, September 11, 2020) for the country’s prospects, with the deterioration of historical institutions and the prominence of social media like YouTube as a source of historical knowledge.

Some of these discourses from institutionalized history have been established and maintained by the post-EDSA elite. However, these narratives when translated into tweets are reconstructed by the subjective agencies of users as they reconcile the conflicting social memory espoused by the competing dominant political groups. We discuss how these discourses are transformed to become counter-memory as they are fortified by a network of diverse memory agents and are embodied in cultural practices vernacular to Twitter.



### **Counter-Memory Network**

As users engage in counter-memory discourses through the #ArawNgMagnanakaw, they enact their agency through the affordances of the platform, enabling them to connect with like-minded users, support others' accounts, and even dispute others on the platform. Participants of the discourse engage primarily through amplification (74.2%) by echoing content by others using the retweet function of Twitter. In the #ArawNgMagnanakaw network, posts by micro-celebrities, ordinary users, and unidentified users had the largest share of tweets that were reposted by other users (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** #ArawNgMagnanakaw network visualization generated using Gephi, with nodes color coded based on user categorization and sized according to degree centrality.

Texts and objects circulated on the platform are also harnessed by other users by “referencing” them in their interactions with others. In the #ArawNgMagnanakaw network, around 10.5% of the network relationships were formed through this interaction—they linked other users’ content and used it to validate or invalidate others’ messages in the discourse. We found that most relationships that referenced others’ tweets were engagements directed toward media institutions, micro-celebrities, and ordinary users, indicating that as users connect with others, they use texts and objects within the network to corroborate ideas or dispute arguments.

Counter-memory discourses are provided additional texture and depth as users corroborate, contest, and negotiate with others participating in the network. On Twitter, users “quote tweet” (a type of retweet) to build on others’ posts, state their reactions, or even contradict them while amplifying the original message. They can also directly engage other users by replying or mentioning them in their content.

We found that only 1.5% of the interactions in the network were collaborative in nature; that is, they manifested agreement to others’ posts while adding more materials and insights and replying with relevant hashtags to others’ tweets to help boost visibility on the platform, and the biggest number of engagements (41.0%) in collaborative interactions were from unidentified users.

Contestations made up less than 1% of the network (0.51%). In the case of #ArawNgMagnanakaw, content produced by prominent political figures and media institutions got the biggest share of contesting engagements. Contestations were most evident in the commemorative post of Bongbong Marcos on his father’s birthday, with hundreds of tweets jeering, ill-wishing, and recounting his father’s atrocities. Contestations were also seen in tweets of Marcos apologists and detractors engaging in debate.

Engagements that negotiate with others comprised 0.42% of the network, and half of these originated from or engaged with media institutions (50%), followed by journalists/reporters/columnists (11.76%) and ordinary users (11.76%). While users expressed agreement with some aspects of the information posted by the press, they negotiated by qualifying, correcting, or even re-signifying its meanings.

Some relationships without apparent link to #ArawNgMagnanakaw also emerged. Ordinary users (66.7%) and unidentified users (33.3%) used the hashtag and tagged prominent actors in the network despite their content’s apparent lack of connection to the #ArawNgMagnanakaw event.

Patterns of linkages emerged from the different interactions in the network, facilitated by the affordances of the platform. Counter-publics manifested as communities that centered on and interacted with key counter-memory agents and their messages as they contested state action designating Marcos as an honorable public persona. Based on publicly available Twitter profiles, Google searches, Twitter profile photo reviews, and recent posts, the 35 top network nodes (those with degrees more than 100) that generated community clusters were found to include elite actors, nontraditional influencers, and ordinary users. Although community clusters typically formed around users who conventionally had a large following such as news organizations (Philstar.com, n.d.; Rappler, 2020) and media personalities/celebrities (Pijuan, n.d.; Reoma, n.d.), alternative sources advanced their own counter-memory narratives. These include

micro-celebrities (e.g., Miss Krizzy, 2020; King, n.d.), academics and subject-matter experts (e.g., Pasion, 2020; Presto, n.d.), ordinary or nonaffiliated users, and even unidentified users. Based on degree centrality, nontraditional sources were more dominant in the counter-memory network than traditional sources. Micro-celebrity Miss Krizzy (2020), with a username parodying the name of Kris Aquino, the daughter of Marcos' political rival, dominated the network with the highest degree of centrality.

### ***Counter-Memory Practices***

Distinct in the counter-memory assemblage is the co-option and rejection of the conventions of commemoration through semantic, material, and creative practices facilitated by Twitter. Semantic practices refer to the use of linguistic elements to resignify the commemoration. The central semantic practice by the hashtag publics was the creation and adaptation of the hashtag #ArawNgMagnanakaw, officiating and proclaiming the day for the commemoration of Marcos as a plunderer and of other corrupt political figures. The tweets took ownership of September 11 as the day to "remember him who was duly awarded this recognition" (personal communication, September 11, 2020) and to "remind(s) us of the horrors of the past" (personal communication, September 11, 2020). Naming was a notable practice in the discourse, often used with superlatives to emphasize the gravity of the event with Marcos being the "greatest thief" and the "world's all-time corrupt leader" (personal communication, September 11, 2020), while also routinely "negating" claims of him being a hero.

The commemoration was also framed to emphasize users' prescribed way of remembering Marcos. Instead of celebrating him, they underlined that their efforts were to "dishonor and spite the birth of the dictator" (personal communication, September 11, 2020). Users evoked juxtapositions between the extravagance of the Marcoses and the poverty of the Filipinos as well as the embezzlement of public funds by the Marcoses and by the current administration funneled to propaganda work online. They also shifted their attention to victims and activists during the Marcos era as people who needed to be acknowledged (Figure 3). The extended networks of users were encouraged to participate by sharing "What's September 11 for you?" (personal communication, September 11, 2020) and to engage in personal acts of commemoration, such as reading history books and offering free professional service. There was also a common use of Internet slang in the conversations, such as "mood," which is a way of expressing that one felt the same way ("Forever a mood"; Liban, 2020; see Figure 4), and "stan," which is a fan culture vernacular to express collective support for someone ("He [Marcos] shouldn't be stanned"; personal communication, September 11, 2020).



**Figure 3. Tweet shifting the discourse to unrecognized heroes and victims of the regime (Pasion, 2020).**



**Figure 4. Tweet comparing the user's mood to the image of a dog urinating on the campaign tarpaulin of Marcos' son, Bongbong Marcos (Liban, 2020).**

Material practices were linked to the curation of information, documents, and illustrations to render the commemoration renewed significance. Users primarily pieced together records, evidence, and reports from international and local agencies and media that were otherwise obscured and separated from each other to materialize the immense wealth that the Marcoses stole from the Philippine government. Some tweets contained links to declassified documents previously unavailable to the public, which showed Marcos having “engineered” martial law to stay in power. Photos of the assets of the Marcoses displaying their exuberant lifestyles, such as their prized artworks, mansions, and properties abroad (Figure 5) were shared. Screenshots and annotations of headlines and Web pages of archives about Marcos’ wealth were also circulated (Figure 6) together with tweets crowdsourcing literature, videos, and other educational references about the Marcos era, as well as those appealing to report social media accounts peddling historical disinformation.



**Figure 5. Tweet identifying the properties of the Marcoses in New York City (Your Daily Dose, 2020).**



**Figure 6. Tweet annotating the Wikipedia page of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. (Dupert, 2020).**

Creative counter-memory practices defined the distinct texture of the commemoration through artistic expression and original invention. The commemoration was characterized by a range of provocative devices, from humor to sarcasm, and even blasphemy. Making a parody of the cautionary signs in public shops, users advised people to be “extra careful with (their) belongings today” (personal communication, September 11, 2020) for it was the day of the thieves. There was also consistent use of metaphors and imageries of Marcos being thief-like, with “him also stealing way to be buried (in the Heroes’ Cemetery)” (“*Pati libingan nya ninakaw nya*”; personal communication, September 11, 2020) and him belonging in hell that “even Satan was careful when he crosses path with Marcos” (“*Pati si satanas nilalagay ang bag sa harap kapag makakasalubong niya si Marcos*”; personal communication, September 11, 2020). The reply functions of Twitter were also used to hijack conversations, both for the majority of the users as well as for the few Marcos supporters redirecting the conversation. Linked to material practices was the remixing and editing of physical and digital commemorative markers. Users created event posters that served as commemorative material for the day, perverting popular imageries and materials related to Marcos. Users also edited photos to create memes, such as Marcos edited into the “Elmo Rise” meme surrounded by the fires of hell (Figure 7) and a digital plaque vividly detailing his atrocious time in office (Figure 8). Another tweet replaces the image of Jesus with Marcos’ face to ridicule the religious-like devotion of the supporters of the former dictator.



**Figure 7. Tweet featuring GIF of Marcos following the template of the "Elmo Rise" meme (Nicks, 2020).**



**Figure 8. Tweet with a digital plaque edited by Twitter user Miss Krizzy (2020).**

### Theorizing Political Agency in Counter-Memory Assemblages

History is not truth but a perspective of it through "a deliberate appraisal, affirmation, or negation" of the order of knowledge (Foucault, 1977, pp. 156–157). The post-authoritarian institutional history written of the Marcos regime was the dominant perspective, only to be upended by revisionist history espoused by the dictator's allies through calculated omissions, suppressions, and distortions of the past through systematic influence operations. In other words, history is contingent on shifting power relations, and the prevailing mnemonic regime in the context of this article was the Duterte administration allied with the Marcoses and their reclaimed political power. Counter-memory also works within this framework by "insurrecting" subjugated knowledges (Medina, 2011) through the fractures and disjunctures in the organization of historical knowledge. It resists the meta-narrative of history by infringing its unity, stability, and consistency to open new sites of contestations (Pickett, 1996). Our critique of this dominant line of analysis, particularly of contemporary counter-memory practices, rests on its assumption that the power of counter-memory is in its resistance to history. Power is purportedly drawn from the "critical potential of [publics'] dejected experiences and memories" to challenge dominant systems of knowledge production (Medina, 2011, p. 11). The problem with this is that history is only partly about what and whose memories are recognized and is primarily about how such memories are organized, remembered, and performed. To undermine history is to undermine its order of knowledge and for counter-memory to be mobilized as a counter-structure "to overcome the rulers through their own rules" (Foucault, 1977, p. 151).

We propose the assemblage of counter-memory as an analytical framework to map the emergent counter-structures of remembering in and through digital media to subvert the historical order/s engineered by political establishments. Our empirical investigation of the hashtag network #ArawNgMagnanakaw revealed the assemblage's resistance to historical revisionism by Marcos' political machinery while concurrently reconstructing the public history instituted by historical establishments in their own terms. It erodes the monopoly of traditional powers in being the decision makers regarding historical knowledge by mobilizing not only plural counter-memory narratives but also heterogeneous actors considered as interlopers in historical production and practices "intolerable" to conventions of remembrance (Pickett, 1996). Power resides not in institutional authority or individuals' capacity to assert their memory but in the conditional relationships borne out of the connections and interactions of agencies, discourses, and performances in the assemblage. It is through this mediatized form of remembrance that "political agency emerges at the intersection of socially and technologically embedded media practices and experiences" (Kaun, Kyriakidou, & Uldam, 2016, p. 2). Political agency renders entities the "capacity to make a difference" (Giddens, 1984, p. 14) by undermining and appropriating political, social, and cultural structures. While individual counter-memory actors have this agency, it is the political agency that emerges from the relationships among individuals, narratives, and technology that changes the conditions of the assemblage's "capacity" to resist history. This "relational" agency renders the assemblage a capacity beyond the rediscovery or rectification of memory (Foucault, 1977, and towards the reconstruction of history to shape the trajectories of reality.

From our empirical investigation arise three key characteristics of counter-memory assemblages and their emergent political agency. First, the locus of remembrance shifts from individual actors and personal commemorative practices to the assemblage of heterogeneous elements composed of actors,



objects, and narratives that enact, materialize, and facilitate connective practices of remembering. We argue that “epistemic friction” (Medina, 2011) emerges when official histories not only contend with counter-memories but also with interfaces, algorithms, and platforms that construct and materialize “subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, 2003) through the ways they govern the memory production, circulation, and consumption. Unlike influence operations that are centralized in the political machinery of the Marcoses, agency in the assemblage is dispersed among a composite group of humans, objects, and meanings and, thus, is constructed rather than unified.

In the case of #ArawNgMagnanakaw, agents resist official histories and revisionist distortions and omissions through the “connective” practices (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011) of remembering. As counter-memory and alternative histories about the Marcos regime become digitally embodied, they are consolidated within a networked structure and become malleable to the constantly shifting functionalities of the platform and the algorithmic logics that configure the network. Nontraditional actors, such as ordinary, unidentifiable users and micro-celebrities, are then afforded the potential to make their counter-memories salient through their strategic use of the features of Twitter. As they corroborate other marginalized or silenced memories on Twitter, capitalize on the institutional power of traditional memory agents, and curate historical materials through retweets and replies, the mnemonic capacity of individuals participating in memory construction is bolstered. “Openness, collaboration, aggregation, reinvigoration, and sustainability” (Liu, 2018, p. 1689) characterize memory construction online, afforded and linked by platforms to form a convergence of discursive formations from which memory is (re)constructed. Twitter, as a technology of memory, becomes not just a venue for the construction, storage, and retrieval of memory for subversive publics—it facilitates and configures the formation of memory assemblages and the extent to which they enact political agency.

Second, the assemblage of counter-memory performs not only the retrieval of subjugated knowledges but also their continuous resignification to resist the political work that suppresses and denies them discursive power. Official post-EDSA history has already sanctioned documentary evidence and victims’ narrative accounts of the corruption and ruthlessness of the Marcos authoritarian regime. However, with the Marcos family regaining political capital, magnified by their alliance with Duterte, such memories have been re-subjugated through systematic historical denials and distortions. Discourses in the assemblage work against these forces by rearticulating silenced and neglected memories through and with other forms of remembrance. If influence operations operate on the logic of revision of historical accounts, the assemblage is about the reconfiguration of memory attuned to the political sensibilities of the time—on what is important to remember now and how it should be remembered in this context. Evident in the data are the affective intensities (Paasonen, 2015) entangled with memory, animating it toward bodies, objects, and events and, consequently, amplifying its resonance in the network. Anger over the misrepresentation of the Marcos era as the “Golden age of the Philippines” spills over to the frustration about corruption by present-day government officials. Affective intensities accumulated with the rise of the hashtag as a trending topic and they bonded expressions of protest and dissent by socially disparate actors. These affective attachments increase the velocity of counter-memories as they are spread throughout the network and become subjected to perpetual reconfiguration that sustains its visibility and mobility in the assemblage (Paasonen, 2015).

The discourses have also positioned counter-memory as a heuristic by designating categories and boundaries to inform political judgment. Remembering Marcos as the preeminent corrupt political figure of all time has transformed him into the archetype of all unscrupulous politicians who exploit fragile political systems. Users have identified themselves as belonging to a particular political identity by drawing the line between "them" against the "enablers, fanatics and apologists" (personal communication, September 11, 2020) of the dictator. These heuristics have become the discursive formations (Foucault, 2013) embodied in hashtags, retweets, and replies that hold together the multiplicity of discourses as new elements embed themselves in the assemblage. More importantly, the assemblage also transformed the discourses to become deliberative by facilitating discussions, debates, and political action. Memory is in a constant process of "becoming" (Bucher, 2018) as the assemblage expands, ebbs, and evolves to materialize a multiplicity of agencies.

Lastly, the subversive practices of remembrance have capacitated the assemblage to reconstruct history "into totally new domains of generalization, practices and transformation" (Foucault, 1977, p. 134). When the "more usual forms of counter-memory" (Sheftel, 2012, p. 147) are futile in the face of political manipulation, there is a need to enlist the alternative of the alternative and breach the bounds of memory work. In the case of the Marcos' influence operations, historical disinformation has permeated all social spaces, even nonpolitical ones, and thus it became necessary to go beyond the conventional forms of resistance and remembrance. The emergence of nontraditional agents of memory attests to the role of platforms as alternative sites for memory construction, where individuals can "question, criticize, and satirize" institution-based historical agents and undermine sanctioned memory (Liu, 2018, p. 1685). Commemoration ceases to be the preservation of memory but the reclamation of history through the continuous struggle against despots and dictators from Marcos' time to the current presidency of Duterte. The vulnerability of collective memory is buttressed by personal frames of remembering (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), and the formalities of public tributes are reappropriated into colloquial, everyday rituals in social media. Artifacts, references, and evidence are transformed into a bricolage where any point can be the beginning and can mesh with other materials in both contemporary history and ephemeral events. These unorthodox and borderline practices expand the threshold of what is acceptable until the perversions become the vernacular of the remembrance. In the hashtag assemblage, users' acts of commemoration have been characterized as subversive by virtue of their violating conventions of remembrance but are also deemed customary within the "conventions" of Twitter and its cultures of use. As such, the assemblage creates the conditions where these practices are signified as transgressive while also being allowed to persist as it creates its own conventions from the relationships of its components. Arguably, subversive practices have always been prevalent within niche groups. What the assemblage does is push them as mainstream sensibilities and confer on them the power to shape the trajectories of the assemblage. Agency in an assemblage becomes mutable, introducing new capacities and transforming existing ones, and it magnifies (or erodes) its power to shape politics.

Both influence operations campaigns and the assemblage of counter-memory leverage the tensions of contested memory and draw from socially constructed narratives to buttress their historical accounts. However, influence operations are deliberate and organized in promoting their politically motivated version of history, and the latter is more contingent on political initiatives converging in mediated social spaces in a

web of alternative remembering. The multiplicity of intent and dynamism of the assemblage allows memory formation to coexist with political relationships in a way that influence operations will never achieve.

### Conclusion

Public commemoration mediated by networked technologies of memory manifests as digital assemblages of noninstitutional actors, affective discourses, and subversive practices. Assemblages serve as the counter-structure requisite to disrupt history, reconfigure dominant systems of knowledge production, and resist memories and forms of commemoration that come from and are enacted by a select few. As efforts to distort the atrocities of the Marcos regime and repair his reputation are advanced by his allies, assemblages mobilize subjugated knowledges omitted and silenced by traditional actors and enact agency in subverting these attempts, potentially providing an alternative structure to historical knowledge production.

By looking at counter-memory from an assemblage perspective, we depart from focusing on counter-memory as based on individual, community, or institutional acts of remembering; counter-commemoration is located in "new memory ecologies" (Brown & Hoskins, 2010, p. 94) as a dynamic process constituted by heterogeneous elements actively engaged in connective practices of commemoration, governed and undergirded by the invisible socio-technical decisions embodied by the architecture of digital media. Through the performance of counter-memory within new technologies of memory, oppositional politics in digital media is able to integrate nontraditional voices in memory work as well as facilitate creative forms of activism that delegitimize elite reconstructions of memory. Future work on counter-memory or the mobilization of memories for social action can use the assemblage approach to disentangle the complexities of remembering as it takes place in new media environments.

While our findings demonstrate the role of networked technologies of memory in surfacing alternative accounts and resisting dominant forms of commemoration, the temporal and ad hoc nature of assemblages arrests its potential to institutionalize such accounts. As these structures materialize in digital media, they are subjected to sociocultural and socio-technical processes operating on digital platforms bound by temporal values such as affect. This means that the critical mass of heterogeneous elements that once constituted assemblages would eventually dissipate. Political opposition can gain inspiration from other data activism efforts that harness digital media by engaging it alongside "analog" forms of activism to maximize its potential for social change, similar to the #NiUnaMenos movement in Argentina (Chenou & Cepeda-Másmela, 2019). Nevertheless, the power of counter-memory as enacted in digital spaces makes memory constantly accessible as scattered traces online, each possessing the potential to be (re)constituted by and within new assemblages. In fact, the #ArawNgMaganakaw emerged again in the next three years with memories being retrieved and re-signified in new discourses about Marcos. While they may be fleeting, subjugated knowledges once surfaced and uttered in and by counter-memory assemblages in networked technologies of memory slowly carve their space in the global memory (Reading, 2011).

The case of Marcos' historical revisionism is part of the larger ecosystem of propaganda and influence operations in the Philippines (Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Soriano & Gaw, 2022). While interventions such as media fact-checking, media literacy, social protests, and academic research abound, how these

regimes of resistance corroborate and collaborate in response to the complex assemblage of disinformation is unclear. What is evident in our research is the centrality of actors deliberately using the informal communicative structures of social media to “make ad hoc connections around particular protest issues and events” (Poell & Rajagopalan, 2015, p. 1). Building this assemblage of counter-memory actors not only amplifies institutional responses to influence operations but also expands the boundaries of truth-telling to include historically marginalized memory agents, engage platform vernacular cultures, and instigate meaningful political action.

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