

Photographing Panahíd: Capturing the Shore as a Hybrid Space and Fishing as an Entangled Phenomenon

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(Received: 19th September 2025; Revised: 30th January 2026; Accepted: 4th February 2026)

Abstract

Photographs are both visual and textual sites for philosophizing on spatial realities. In this photo article, we explore the shore as a hybrid space and fishing as an interaction of the permeable and entangled bodies of the human and the more-than-human through the practice of panahíd, a small-scale fishing practice in Miagao, within Panay Island, Philippines. This paper combines my interpretation of photographs with the photographer's own insights documented through our unstructured and in-depth interview/conversations or *pakikipagkuwentuhan*. We treat photographs as both visual data and texts that allow us to reflect on the cultural, environmental, and political realities surrounding the Miagao shore and its fishers. Our posthumanist reading of the photographs of panahíd reveals the shore as a hybrid space where ecological and cultural processes are entangled. This challenges conventional and dualist notions of fixed spatial boundaries across bodies and spaces which allows us to reinterpret our lifeworlds specifically as a people of an island. The findings reveal a growing appreciation for small-scale fisheries amid contemporary threats, particularly the construction of seawalls that place an arbitrary rupture along the shoreline. This allows us to reflect on the effect of hard infrastructure in the shared flourishing of humans and nonhumans and the impact of political embankments – both literally and figuratively – over waters. Ultimately, our philosophical reflections offer a perspective on spaces as fluid, which water particularly embodies, captured and treasured in photographs.

Keywords: coastal photography; small-scale fishing; hybrid spaces; posthumanism

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Introduction

Deborah Bird Rose reflects on the connection between ethics and ontology as she writes in her book *Shimmer*: “in lived experience [...] to be alive is to be enmeshed in the lives of others, and [...] to be enmeshed is to be responsible” (2022). These words reminded us of the various vistas around our university town in the Visayas, nestled between the mountains and the sea. Inside our vast campus, life does indeed feel like an enmeshment with nature. A most especially valued place for us is the shoreline along one side of the Miagao coast found inside our campus that stretches towards several barangays. Yet, the image of the black-sanded shore, shimmering under the sun, is now but a memory to most of us since that long stretch is now mostly occupied by a huge cement-based embankment, most commonly known to us as a seawall. The loss of the shoreline also meant the loss of the practice of panahid or net fishing along the municipal waters, a few meters off the shoreline. The seawall was built due to the need to protect the residents from the rising sea levels and to implement a defensive wall in the case of huge tides. In this photo article, we capture and reflect on the memory of the shoreline and call for a rethinking of our present models of embankments. This article also wishes to preserve the community traditions that are deeply entangled with the shore through photographs.

Seawalls¹ have lately become the popular solution to flooding, sea-level rise, and high tide in our country. This is because the Philippines, as an archipelagic country in Southeast Asia, is currently facing escalating environmental challenges as a consequence of the global climate crisis. These challenges come in the form of rising sea levels, stronger typhoons, tsunamis, and flooding, which render the Philippines one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change (Hicks, 2022; International Organization for Migration, 2021). These events have been severely affecting coastal communities, where the shoreline is seen as a preferred site for housing among fishing communities that are now, due to rising sea levels, in heightened levels of vulnerability. Within this broader regional context, Miagao can be considered as one of the coastal towns experiencing the consequences of global warming. As a coastal community, it relies on small-scale fishing (SSF) practices for daily sustenance and community interaction. One concrete practice in SSF is the panahid, which is the main subject of our reflections and photos. We present this SSF practice as a community tradition that reveals the deep entanglements that human bodies share with each other and with the sea, especially the liminal and dynamic space that is the shoreline. However, this practice is also threatened by the building of the seawalls, which have become the most preferred solution of LGUs to combat sea-level rise, storm surges, and tsunamis instead of nature-based solutions. According to a study by Nunn, Klock, & Duvat (2021), the building of seawalls is a maladaptive solution rooted in colonial legacies, applying successful Western continental and urban empire legacies to an island community. Being a long-time subject of Spanish colonization and US imperialism, the Philippines has historically adapted solutions according to colonial models of embankments of shoreline and rivers. Furthermore, the building of seawalls furthers the erosion of the coastline and has decreased the activities of SSF in the area of Miagao. More effective nature-based solutions can be encouraged that will respect the continuity of local SSF practices, which economically and socially benefit the people and prevent the erosion of the shoreline. This nature-based solution can be rooted in the

¹ The seawalls in the Philippines often have the same design and purpose that serves as a layer of defense against big tidal waves, high tide, or tsunamis. The seawall in Miagao started construction during the first quarter of the year 2024 led by the Department of Public Works and Highways. It is known as the Miagao East Coastline access road as it also serves as an access road for public and private vehicles (Department of Public Works and Highways, 2024).

posthuman view of the co-flourishing of humans and more-than-humans as a more sustainable developmental model (Perricone et al., 2023).

Despite this normal daily interaction and practice of panahid, there is a lack of literature that explores panahid and the shoreline as cultural sites and spaces of intersection of ecological, anthropological, social, and political forces. In this essay, we present photographs wherein we would like to offer a more dynamic and posthuman view of the shoreline and the practice of panahid. This essay also aims to contribute to a Southeast Asian imagination of posthumanism, agential relations, and phenomena developed much earlier by Karen Barad (2007). We also wish to evaluate and discuss the huge impact of infrastructural responses to the climate crisis that have led to contentious debates about its impact on the local community and to SSF practices.

We enter into the debate by viewing the shoreline as an important space of human/nonhuman entanglements where the practice of panahid as SSF facilitates important relational values among the human and nonhuman agents. This paper challenges the entrenched human/nonhuman divide that is exacerbated by physical embankments such as seawalls. Through the photographs and our reflections, we hope to expand the understanding of small-scale fisheries beyond economic and scientific frameworks by emphasizing the cultural and community value of panahid and the shoreline through our philosophical reflections. This paper combines my interpretation of photographs with the photographer's own insights documented through our unstructured and in-depth interview/conversations or *pakikipagkuwentuhan/pagsugilanon*, roughly translated into English as "sharing-of-insights," as a form of indigenous research method (Drawson et al., 2017). Secondly, photos of the activity of panahid are taken which are incorporated in this essay. Through a visualization and examination of the impact of hard infrastructure (e.g., the seawall), we expose these structures as a rupture on hybrid coastal zones in Miagao. Ultimately, we call for a reimagining of the shoreline as a fluid and relational space that reflects the deeply entangled Visayan communities through a presentation and critical analysis of the photographs. Our analyses are guided by Barad's agential realism and inputs from community members through the photographer's conversations with community members or *pakikipagkuwentuhan* (sharing-of-insights, storytelling). The method of *pakikipagkuwentuhan* is a form of indigenous research methodology rooted in Filipino psychology (Church & Katigbak, 2002; Drawson et al., 2017). It aims to ground local research in the everyday experiences of people and is rooted in the Filipino core value of *kapwa*. In the realm of indigenous research methodology, the researcher and the respondents share a relationship based on *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (friendly relations), where the respondents are not expected to formally answer survey or interview questions but to informally share and tell their stories related to the research topic.

Ultimately, after considering input from community members through the immersion of the photographer, we incorporate it into our posthumanist reading of the photographs of panahid. Our reading and presentation of the photographs argue that the shore is a hybrid space where ecological and cultural processes are entangled. This challenges conventional and dualist notions of fixed spatial boundaries across bodies and spaces and allows us to reinterpret our lifeworlds specifically as a people of an island.

Panahid is an important cultural practice that dates back to the early history of Miagao and is considered a cultural heritage (Dioso and Villavert, 2024). It is seen by many as part of their daily community interaction, as it involves men, women, and children who spontaneously join the practice (the process is described in the latter part of this paper). People also share in the bounty of fish that is caught, as all those who helped pull or even

some bystanders are given fish to share. There is no commercialized way of calculating how much to give – one is just given.

Panahid also involves important ecological processes because natural elements are indispensable in this practice. One needs the shoreline as a space for docking the boats safely, the shore allows easy transition from the shallow to deeper waters, upon docking there is no need to lift the boats (unlike when there is a seawall), and people can easily come to the shore to help pull the net, signaling community effort since the net is heavy.

The shoreline is an indispensable space in this practice and can be framed as a hybrid space. De Silva discusses hybrid space as a combination of digital and physical spaces (Godlewicz-Adamiec & Piszczatowski, 2024) while Donna Haraway imagines the concept of the hybrid through a combination of machine and organism (Haraway, 2016). A hybrid space, however, in this study, is understood as a co-constitution of humans, environmental space, and tools. In the particular practice of SSF that is panahid, the co-constitution occurs across human bodies, including the fishers, the community members who assist, the boats, and the actual physical space that is the shoreline. With the absence of any one of the elements, the act of panahid is not possible. There is not one superior element, but instead all co-constitute one another. This is consistent with the Baradian critique of anthropocentrism that deems the human being as the center of historical and cultural events. In the case of panahid, the absence of the boats, the fishing objects, and the shoreline will render panahid impossible. All of these elements are not individual beings by themselves but constitute one single phenomenon that makes small-scale fishing in the community possible.

Our essay also enters the discourse through a visualization of panahid through photographs. We would like to bring a visual perspective to the discourse by appealing to the sense of sight that captures colors, use of space, lighting, and composition to discuss the issues surrounding the shoreline and the threat of the seawall. This is consistent with the approach to posthumanities that considers an interdisciplinary conversation across the artistic disciplines to illuminate conversations on particular issues. Here, panahid is presented in its visual form. Photos of the shoreline, the process of panahid, and the people and tools are presented to make visible our arguments that (1) the shore is an important hybrid space for panahid to occur and (2) panahid itself is a phenomenon made of co-constitutive elements of the shoreline, tools, and people.

Small-Scale Fishing and Visual Narratives

Panahid is a communal fishing practice that involves people, even children, pulling the lines or ropes to draw the seine nets to shore. Visayan researchers Dioso & Villavert (2024) have documented and detailed the whole process: it makes use of the *sahid* (a double stick net with large mesh) on the *sarahidan* (a boat with outriggers characterized by four paddles attached by a rope to its sides). Panahid requires a series of steps that need communal cooperation. First, the *sahid* is dropped into the sea where the fishers board on two boats parallel to each other. As they hold the *sahid*, they have to pay attention to the current to get a catch. Then the head fisher, known as the *maestro*, sails on a small boat to get control of the other side of the net. After a significant amount of catch, the *maestro* signals using a *budyong* (helmet sail) to send a message to the locals and companion fishers to adjust the pace or force of pulling the ropes to drag the net back to the shore while maintaining a parallel pulling of both ends. Both groups must be synchronized in pulling and bringing the net to the shore. Other sound and word signals are continuously used in the whole process while at sea. The process of pulling the net to the shore also involves a lot of cooperation from the

manugbutong (people assigned or who volunteer to pull) or the locals who help to pull the net at the desired location on the shore. Once the *sahid* is settled with the caught fish, the harvest is distributed to all who helped in the process: men, women, and children, even if they were not the fishers involved at sea. Even some onlookers are also given some token from the harvest as well.



Figure 1: Fishers preparing the *sahid* on the *sarahidan* and getting ready to sail. (Quitag, 2025)

This whole process of panahid is a communal activity that the photographer attempted to capture and preserve with the goal in mind of using photography as a visual site for capturing an important communal practice that includes the shoreline as a crucial element. Our analysis of the photographs hopes to challenge the arbitrary boundaries we set between nature and culture, sea and land, humans and nonhumans. Conversations and informal interviews of the photographer with the fishers and local community suggest that the seawall disrupted the activity of panahid since it did not allow a space for the small fishing vessels to dock. Fishers have to dock at the centralized docking station that is several kilometers away from most of the households which has led to a significant decline of the practice of panahid along the coast where seawalls have been built. This is an example of an infrastructure that does not take into consideration the communal life of the people as well as an important SSF that provides accessible fish supply to the community. This boundary, that is the seawall, inflicts ‘violence, hatred, and suffering’ (Rose, 2022) that has become the ontological foundation for infrastructure that seeks to further the divide between nature and human beings, which justifies the former’s dominion over and abuse of the latter. This boundary between the human and nonhuman is artificial and worth challenging, but it is often a challenge to verbalize. This moved us to turn to photographs as visual narratives and apply an autoethnographic approach to “reading” the photos. The photographer himself summarizes in his photos and reflections his many months of observing panahid and *pakikipagkuwentuhan* with the residents along the shorelines of Miagao. We also apply the method of *pakikipagkuwentuhan* as we analyze the photos that serve as the product of the photographer’s observation of panahid.

Visual narratives, in the form of photographs, are important ancillary tools for environmental communication. They are visual cues that give life and animate the fellow more-than-human agents and center them as narrative objects (Plumwood 2002 as cited in

Claessen, 2021). Taylor (2014) also posits that visual depictions have affective and cognitive effects that allow us to value “cryptic creatures” through creative and inventive depictions (as cited in Claessen, 2021). Moreover, photographs form part of the historical continuum by documenting moments along the shoreline and SSF practices that are evanescent and threatened. The practice of panahid as SSF is evanescent because it is constantly threatened by sea-level rise, which causes a shortening of the shoreline and the building of hard infrastructure such as the seawall. Thus, photographs have the power to tell stories and capture moments along the shoreline that no longer exist in some parts of the Miagao coast.

Furthermore, visual narratives also make tangible the interspecies connections and entanglements that we share with the world. It starts with “sensory participation and observation that can fuel the narrative processing.” They also serve as a starting point for noticing or observing those that have been hidden or made absent (Claessen, 2021). In visualizing panahid through photographs, we are allowed to see and observe all the elements coming together at the same time: people, shore, fishing nets, and boats appealing to the sense of sight, touch, and even smell. Captured in one frame, we can further understand the discussion of Barad on phenomena, the entangled agencies of materials, objects, and people, as the basic unit of reality and non-individual agencies themselves.

We are not discrediting the fact that solutions should be sought to battle climate crises but we need infrastructures that respect and reflect the rich cultural practices and contexts of the coastal communities. This exploration allows us to reflect on the effects of hard infrastructure in the shared flourishing of humans and nonhumans and the impact of political embankments – both literally and figuratively – over waters and shores.

Lastly, the material turn in cultural studies, as advocated by Barad, also poses a challenge for us to view the photograph from a posthuman lens. By applying Barad’s concept of the *agential cut*, we can reintroduce the camera as an apparatus that specifies the line between the observer (photographer) and the observed (the shoreline, water, people, and nature) (Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012). This “cut” is not an arbitrary line, from a constructivist point of view, but a temporary difference drawn between two “acting agents”: the observer and the observed (Barad, 2007). Thus, a photograph becomes a product of this agential cut that acts as evidence of the continued interaction and intra-action of agencies. From a constructivist-nihilist point of view, the world is too big for us to understand, wherein we are always inside our linguistic constructs, but from a materialist and posthumanist point of view, we are always enmeshed with the world, and we make use of the apparatuses to make sense of them, focusing on one aspect or the other.

The Shoreline as a Hybrid Space

Van Doreen and Rose contend that we are “bound up in relationships of nourishment, care, meaning making” (2016), while Barad extends this argument by positing that matter and meaning are inseparable. This brings back the realist view on matter as having ontological meaning and substance, bringing nature, as an entity, not only within the mental “here” but in the physical and actual “here” and “there,” a discussion first started by ecocritics Fromm and Glotfelty (Fromm & Glotfelty, 1996). Local cosmologies in Panay depend on the reading of the material realities of nature and collaborate with the signs it produces. The inseparability of matter and meaning, which posthumanists posit much later in the 21st century, is already embedded in the consciousness and practices of the local fishers. The way winds, animals, plants, waves, and heavenly bodies behave are taken as communicative signs that signal favorable or unfavorable conditions for fishing. Here, nature is not simply a backdrop or

setting for everyday fishing life but is seen as an important, active, and co-constitutive agent in the operations of the SSF folks. Barad's insistence on the meaningfulness of material bodies is already a long-held ontology and epistemology for the fishers of Miagao, who consider the behaviors of nature as important signals that guide their fishing activities. Nature, in this sense, operates intra-actively with human agencies in the act of fishing.

We discuss and reflect on some photographs, as visual narrations and agential cuts, that capture panahid and the shoreline, drawing on Karen Barad's discussion of agential realism and phenomena. We argue that the shoreline is an important zone where panahid, as an SSF, occurs as a significant phenomenon. We cannot separate panahid from the shoreline, and we are now confronted by structures that divide them irreversibly.

Agential realism is a framework proposed by Barad (2007) that challenges the traditional divide between philosophy and cultural studies, human and non-human, nature and culture. It posits that knowledge claims arise not simply from linguistic, cultural, or natural causes alone (in the sense of a one-way causation), but from the entangled interactions of agencies of humans, nature, and objects. It builds on an ontology where matter is continuously changing and does not have a fixed essence or property. Rather, the "essence" of matter arises from its interaction with other matter. In fact, Barad uses the term intra-action to connote that individual essences do not precede their interaction/intra-action with other bodies. The essence of things comes about or is specified upon contact with other matter, which also changes with other matter that comes into play. Thus, matter does have ontological essence, but this essence is mutable and dynamic. Barad's ontology reintroduces realism from the posthuman perspective by explaining that objects and bodies are to be distinguished only according to their agentic intra-action with other objects. This distinction is not determined by language constructs but by the very agency that arises from the object upon contact with other objects:

Posthumanism doesn't presume the separateness of any-"thing," let alone the alleged spatial, ontological, and epistemological distinction that sets humans apart. (2007)

Unlike classical realism, which often assumes a fixed reality made up of independent and clearly separate objects (as in Newtonian-based philosophy), leading to a distinct separation between language and the world, agential realism challenges this claim. Barad follows Bruno Latour's notion of "hybrid spaces" where nature and culture continuously intermingle rather than exist as separate domains (Godlewicz-Adamiec & Piszczatowski, 2024). It also challenges the ongoing constructivism that centers on the human valuation of nature rather than seeing nature and culture as interdependent worlds. Furthermore, drawing on Donna Haraway, Barad cites that "what counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about" (Haraway 1988 as cited in Barad, 2007), echoing the supposition that our epistemic attitudes towards that world determine our relationship with the world.

Central to Barad's agential realist ontology is the idea that the fundamental units of reality are neither isolated objects nor pure mental constructs. Rather, they are phenomena which are defined as entangled material agencies that emerge precisely from and through an ongoing intra-action rather than preexisting independent and discrete entities. Objects and subjects emerge through their relational entanglements with each other and with other objects, and they all come to being through them. In a sense, for agential realism, being is becoming, or to be more precise, phenomenon is a constant becoming. Barad further clarifies that phenomena are not simply situated in, or located in, particular environments. Rather,

“environments” and “bodies” are not merely intermingling or entangled but are intra-actively co-constituted (Barad, 2007; Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012).

Connecting agential realism’s ontology to epistemology allows us to view knowledge as not about producing “true representations” that correspond to a separate, fixed, immutable reality. Instead, knowing is a practice, a performative act of engagement with the world, where meaning and matter are inseparable. This aligns with the material turn in cultural studies, which departs from logocentric discourse, toward looking at and studying matter and materialities as lively, agentive, and co-constitutive of all life, where basic units are not objects or individual bodies but phenomena – the intra-action of bodies. This leads us to understand that humans are not the sole agents of change or meaning (the posthuman critique of human exceptionalism) but are beings-of-the-world that partake in complex entanglement with nonhuman beings, objects, and forces. Matter is not static or passive but agentive, that is, constantly reconfiguring itself and differentiating itself according to agential cuts and according to varied phenomena.

Panahid and the shoreline enter into our discussion as our objects of agential materialist inquiry. Panahid is a single phenomenon in the agential realist sense because of the elements that co-constitute one another: the shore, the fishers, the net, the boats, and other tools. All of these elements act intra-actively as co-equal agents that make the practice of SSF possible. Without one of these elements, the act of panahid is not possible. Though human fishers act as the efficient agent in the panahid, their efforts are not enough without the material agency of the tools and the spatial agent that is the shore. In the case of the panahid in Miagao, the important space that is the shore is being threatened by the seawall.

Moreover, through our reflections on the photographs as visual sites and narratives, we argue that the shoreline is a hybrid space, a public zone where humans and more-than-human bodies intra-act and constitute phenomena. Here, panahid itself is an agential cut that defines the multiple agencies of the objects, nature, and human beings. Furthermore, panahid is this performative act of engagement that transforms or specifies the agencies of both the shoreline and human bodies – it is the agential cut in this sense. The seawall, on the other hand, creates a different agential cut that threatens community values and cooperation, as we will see in the last discussion.

Touching the Sun

The first photo aims to depict this co-creation of bodies through a defamiliarized depiction of the net as an object, the human subject, and the sun, where the emphasis on color gradients visualizes the blurring of lines among bodies, showing our entanglement with other bodies: the rays of the sun do not stop at a harsh line, but its rays seep through the whole surface of the photo. Secondly, in this photo, panahid is captured in a sort of trance-like lens to present it as something more than a fishing method: it is a deeply communal activity and tradition that reflects the Filipino value of *pakikipagkapwa* along the coastal areas of Miagao (De Guia, 2005; Enriquez, 1986). *Pakikipagkapwa* is known as a fundamental Filipino value rooted in the core value that we call *kapwa*. It could be roughly translated as “fellow being,” which encompasses the recognition that one’s identity is shared and extends towards the other fellow beings. This sense of *kapwa* could also extend to both humans and nonhumans (De Guia, 2005). Filipino anthropologist F. Landa Jocano hails this as the core Filipino values system (Jocano, 1997). Moreover, *pakikipagkapwa* is a value-in-action that moves people to treat other fellow human beings as equals (Enriquez, 1977 as cited in Church & Katigbak, 2002). It can also be extended to nature where the more-than-human and the rest of creation

are considered co-equals (Wong & Salazar, 2025; De Guia, 2005). In the context of panahid, *pakikipagkapwa* is an example of a value that considers the intra-active dimension of fishing as human agencies, fishing tools, and the agency of nature are considered essential. *Pakikipagkapwa* as a posthumanist value translates concretely to the fishers' knowledge of reading the signals of the environment through a sensitivity to the behavior of the animals and plants, wind directions, the appearance and colors of the sea, and the movement of heavenly entities (Dioso & Villavert, 2024).



Figure 2: A fisher preparing the sahid (net). (Quitag, 2021)

Panahid always involves collective effort, from the process of casting a large net into the waters to catch small fish for sustenance and not for selling to the pulling together of the huge harvest. This also involves paying attention to the signs of nature, where the fishers must be attentive to the tides and other signals that indicate weather conditions. Ropes are attached to the net, where several people are needed to pull the heavy net back to the shore. This is the point where more members of the community unite to harvest the fish. In this particular photo, however, the focus is to illustrate the net and nature as elements that are larger than life – to portray their more-than-human dimension. As the foreground, the net fills the whole frame and seems to contain the human subject. In the background, the sun shining on the silhouette of the human subject extends its arms towards the arms of the tree branch on the right. This was a deliberate choice on the part of the photographer to render his own version of Michelangelo's *Creation of Man* by connecting the arms of the human and nature. The figure of the human subject is also crouched to depict its nonconfrontational approach to nature, showing that the subject is comfortable with being enveloped by nature. This depiction of the arm of the fisher and the branch of the tree reaching out to each other rewrites the

Creation of Man as an anthropocentric frame of reference for the dominion of man over nature as the Creator, God, bestows full power on man to rule over creation. This “version” of the photographer, instead, reframes a relationship of co-equality of the human person with the more-than-human and with nature. The act of extending one’s arms to one another is opposed to an action of command or dominion. Both human beings and nature are co-constitutive elements in the act of panahid, where one is not more than the other.

This photo also appeals to the sense of sight through the bright illumination of the sun at the focal point of the photo, rendering both the tree branch and the human being as silhouettes in the photo, placing them on equal terms with one another. The photo is also a summary of the important elements in the act of panahid: the fisher, the tools, and the environment – none of these elements is accidental, but all are substantial bodies needed to constitute the phenomenon of panahid.

Life Along the Shoreline

The process involved in panahid, as captured in the photo below, fosters cooperation and shared labor that goes beyond “camaraderie” but could best be described as starting with *pakikipagkapwa* where everyone is welcome to help. Usually, even non-residents of the area are allowed to help with pulling the net and later on partake in the sharing of the harvest. It is an automatic gesture of sharing and social connection to give a part of the harvest to all who helped pull the net. Such participation that welcomes outsiders suggests that social boundaries within the context of panahid are fluid and permeable, typical of the Filipino trait of *pakikitungo* (social propriety) and seeing other non-residents as *hindi ibang tao* (not unlike us). This reveals the highly relational sensibilities of the people in this area of Miagao, facilitated by the panahid. This *pakikipagkapwa*, or communal relation brought about by a Filipino sense of shared identity through panahid that functions as an intangible cultural heritage, enmeshed within the daily life of the people, can be seen as a collective practice beyond its economic dimension. The photo above employs darker tones as it signals the time of day that panahid is usually done, which occurs from sunset until dusk. This photo also highlights panahid as an activity that involves more people from the community, aside from the fishers. This photo features the *manugbutong* (pullers) whose task is to pull the net to shore together to properly divide the harvest. As this is a communal practice, women and children often participate in this activity and are given a share of the harvest. Sometimes even visitors not from the barangay can join.



Figure 3: Locals pulling the net together. The net is heavy due to it being filled with fish. (Quitag, 2018)

Again, panahid could best be understood in this photo as a phenomenon, in the sense of Barad's agential realist ontology. Panahid is this material phenomenon that cannot be brought into existence without human fishers, fishing nets, water, and the shoreline – all of which become the important co-constitutive actors whose agencies are precisely specified and brought about during the process of fishing. The photo illustrates this entanglement by highlighting fishers interacting/intra-acting closely with the nets and the natural elements, dissolving the boundaries between humans, objects, and spaces. This perspective aligns with agential realism's rejection of a fixed and rigid separation between humans and nonhumans, emphasizing that bodies, tools, and environments intra-act by way of the phenomenon of panahid.

Panahid can be understood as an agential cut in Karen Barad's framework because it is a specific material practice that enacts boundaries and distinctions within the entangled phenomena of the shoreline. An agential cut is the process by which phenomena are differentiated into distinct but co-constitutive entities that act upon one another. These boundaries are not pre-existing but are actively formed through intra-actions. As a collective practice, panahid is the enactment or performance that creates what seems to be a boundary but is actually a relational configuration where each element's essence comes about within and through the performance of panahid. In more concrete terms, through the practice and performance of panahid, the shoreline, the nets, the fishers, fish, and the water come into meaningful co-becoming as a single phenomenon. In simpler terms: the essence of the fisher, the *manugbutong* (those who help in pulling the net), the net, and the shoreline are all realized within the phenomenon of panahid and do not exist as such outside of panahid. These distinct actors or bodies realize their agencies precisely through their intra-activity of constituting the phenomenon of panahid. In summary, this intra-action draws a specific line that defines the space of fishing (i.e., who participates, what objects are used, where the practice occurs, when, and how) and simultaneously constitutes the identities and agencies of all involved actors. In this specific intra-action, all elements are considered essential, and a removal of one element would cause a rupture in the activity. In the case of panahid in Miagao, this rupture came in the form of seawalls, which is illustrated in the photo below. The cement-based seawall and cement-made wave breakers have totally changed the topography of the shoreline and have totally erased the shore in many parts of the coastline. This has led to the disappearance of the coastline in some parts of coastal Miagao.



Figure 4: Concrete-based seawall on the right with artificial wave-breakers on the left. This allows limited docking places for the SSF. (Quitag, 2025)

Furthermore, panahid shapes how the community relates with the shoreline, where the symbiotic relationship between nature and members of the community is realized. Viewing panahid in this way offers an important nuance in understanding SSF as a phenomenon of relational becomings.



Figure 5: Aerial photo of seawall and wave breakers along the coastline of Miagao, Iloilo. (Quitag, 2025)

Concerns about the future of panahid resonate strongly with the residents, particularly its transmission to the younger generation and in the era of Build. Better. More in the Philippines, where hard infrastructure becomes the first response to the climate crisis². Other modern ruptures also exist: technology, internal migrations, and the most recent one of physical loss of access to the shoreline due to the building of the seawalls. Not only does the shoreline become inaccessible, but it also becomes non-existent as the seawall changes the topography of the coastal area, making panahid a dangerous or even impossible feat. The diminished participation and the decline in the practice of panahid along the stretch of the seawall have been evident, as well as the change of social activities that are now mediated by mostly commercial spaces. In fact, the water is now totally separated from the sea by the big blocks of cemented seawall. The coast that we speak of is no longer accessible and is separated by a huge, tall cement wall, preventing access to the sea. The liminal space that is the shoreline is nowhere to be found in the areas that have been photographed. This reflects broader challenges to traditional ecological knowledge systems susceptible to rapid social change and political changes. Thus, a decline in the activity of panahid in this area has occurred. The concept of embankments along the shoreline is problematic as it has led to the erosion of an important practice within this fishing community since panahid as an SSF is not only a practice of survival but of community relations.

² “*Build. Better. More*” or BBM is the main slogan of the infrastructural projects of the current President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., whose administration seeks to prioritize the improvement of the country’s infrastructure with an overall investment cost of 8.8 Trillion in Philippine Peso (Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department, 2025).

Confronting Embankments

The photo above is an aerial view of the newly constructed seawall in Miagao. This shows the overcrowding of small-scale boats along the end of the seawall that limits the number of people who can participate in SSF and has eroded the practice of panahid in the area. The contrast of the color of the boats with the dull color of the seawall and wave breakers shows a great difference in aesthetics as well. The seawall is seen as a cold, dull, and out-of-place article of infrastructure as opposed to the boats that have long been held as tools and cultural objects in the community. From an aerial shot, the seawall also appears as a rupture in aesthetics.

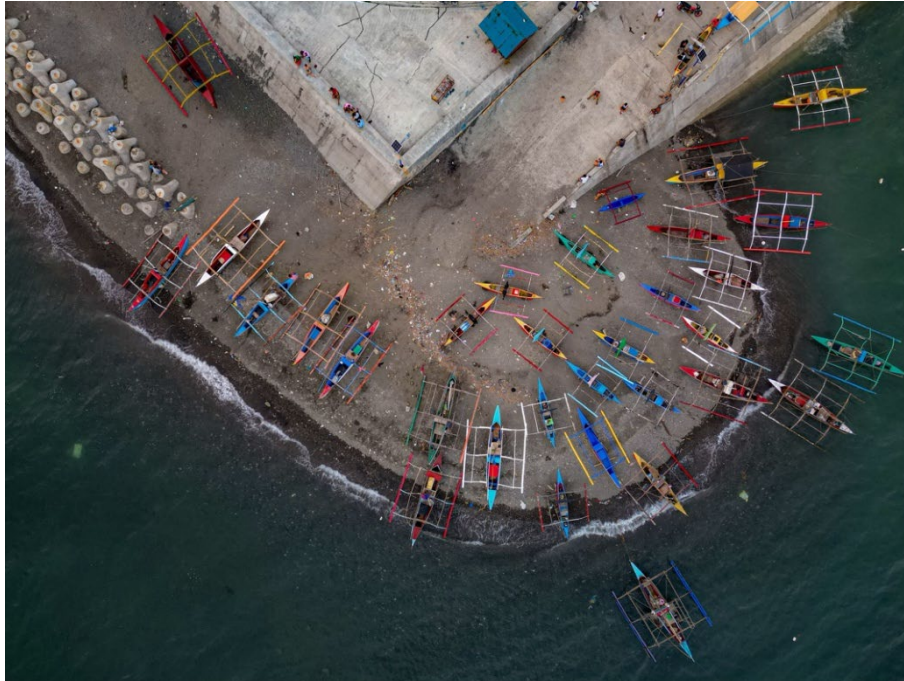


Figure 6: Aerial view of the boats docking by the edge of the seawall. This is the only space where docking is possible. (Quitag, 2026)

Moreover, the shoreline emerges in these photographs as a hybrid space. It is a continuously evolving zone where humans, tools, and nature co-constitute one another. This space is not a fixed boundary, but a permeable “fluid interface” (Barad, 2007) shaped by ecological agencies and cultural practices. In a sense, both the cultural practice of panahid and the space that is the shoreline make up and complexify the phenomenon that leads to relational becoming of human beings with nature and tools. Without the interaction of nets, water, fish, humans, and tools, the cultural practice is not possible. This very important co-constitution and co-becoming of agencies is crucial in the practice of panahid, making all the elements important, such that when one element disappears, panahid is not possible. Thus, the great threat that the seawall as an embankment poses. Additionally, not only is this embankment physical but also epistemic since it renders the shoreline non-existent and water inaccessible to the younger generation and even to the generations who have seen this change.

The photo below presents the shoreline as an indispensable site for social gathering, leisure, and ecological entanglements that embody a dynamic relationship among people, water, fish, and fishing tools. It is thus a public space meant to be accessible and open for communal use, reinforcing its role as a social and environmental commons. The photograph

shows this interplay of several generations and nature that reflects the symbiotic relationships that sustain panahid as a phenomenon, the basic unit for a dimension of community life in Miagao and in many coastal areas in the Philippines.



Figure 7: The shoreline in one part of Miagao during sunset. The seawall can be seen in the background, being presented as a looming threat. (Quitag, 2024)

Seawalls in the Philippines are designed to protect the coastal areas from flooding and from sea level rise, yet, ironically, they have also changed community dynamics. Large portions of the shoreline once used by fishers and residents (even non-fishers help in panahid) have now been made inaccessible. This change disrupts ecological continuity and alters space, rendering the shoreline non-existent. This transformation has also led to an increase in the commercialization of coastal spaces that displace non-commercial and community-based activities. For local fishers, these physical barriers translate to a cultural barrier and the loss of cultural heritage and livelihood that connect the sea and the people through the hybrid space that is the shoreline and the phenomenon of the panahid.

The shoreline stands (or once stood) as a meaningful public space where social and cultural encounters occur daily. As a government-regulated coastal space, the shore is intended to be accessible to all, serving as a space for communal activities. Panahid, as captured in this photo, offers an opportunity for social cooperation and cohesion; thus, the shoreline is not only a physical but a political and cultural space that defines the limits and possibilities of belonging. However, privatization trends and structures have complicated this accessibility and forced coastal planners to put up seawalls as the fastest solution since to enjoin private owners to move further from the shore is a logistical impossibility at present. In this light, this shoreline reflects broader socio-political dynamics around public space, ownership, and local politics.

Finally, the encroachment of physical infrastructures such as seawalls disrupts this continuum and co-constitution, severing access to shorelines and transforming these once fluid zones into fragmented spaces. These embankments impose both material and epistemic barriers that threaten the practice of panahid and the community becomings that it sustains. The loss and redefinition of shorelines pose critical questions to researchers, artists, and

public policy makers about how communities negotiate belonging, identity, and vitality in an area that is constantly influenced by environmental, social, and political factors.

Conclusion

The documentation and reflective exploration of panahid in the Miagao shoreline explores this SSF practice as a phenomenon in an agential realist sense that cannot be separated from the important space that is the shoreline. The shoreline is a fluid, dynamic, and hybrid space where the co-constitution of humans, tools, and nature occurs through the phenomenon of panahid. Panahid embodies not only a livelihood but also an intangible cultural heritage grounded on communal cooperation and social values such as pakikipagkapwa and pakikitungo. As such, viewing panahid and the shoreline from a posthumanist and agential realist perspective challenges the constructivist and Cartesian ontologies that separate human experience from the world. Human lived experience is grounded in the materialities of the world and is enmeshed in it. Human experiences are a constant becoming, constituted together with the world of objects and nature. These worlds are not separate but entangled. In fact, human agencies and human identities emerge in this process of co-constitution with the world. In the case of the shorelines of Miagao, we mourn the loss of them to the seawall, and we hope that more studies can be written to challenge this infrastructure.

The collection of a few photos of panahid in this article occupies a critical role in documenting and preserving a way of life increasingly endangered by ecological and infrastructural change. Collating images of panahid does more than merely record: Doing so activates memories and cultural meanings and serves as a visual archive. Additionally, this photo article presents the shoreline as a relational space and panahid as a phenomenon of intra-action, placing in more concrete and cultural terms the ontology of Barad. The photographic images act as visual narratives and agential cuts, making visible the inseparability of bodies, tools, water, sand, and fish in the practice of panahid. They also serve as a poignant archive that preserves moments in a vanishing lifeworld. Through such documentation, we resist and protest this loss.

Ultimately, we call for a reexamination of how coastal infrastructures are conceived, planned, and implemented. We want to advocate for solutions that respect and preserve the co-constitutions of human and more-than-human bodies, which are characteristic of SSF and coastal communities in the Visayas and in the Philippines. Embracing a posthumanist and materialist ontology invites us to accept that the world is beyond human and linguistic constructs. We challenge entrenched dichotomies between human and nature and recognize the equal flourishing of spaces, the human world, and the more-than-human world.

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