

Non-Government Organizations and the 1992 Philippine Elections*

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Abstract

Philippine political behavior has been viewed within a patron-client framework, where the politician as patron extracts support from voters in exchange for concrete benefits. These patrons then formed the basis for the factions and ever-shifting coalitions of Philippine politics. The patron-client model is in the keeping with a view of political participation which revolves around elections, said to be the central drama of Philippine politics. Certainly, the most dramatic moment in recent Philippine political history—the 1986 regime change—was inextricably bound up in elections, and the Filipino's determination that elections be restored as free exercises of choice.

This focus on electoral activity tends to exclude other forms of political participation. There are other uses of "democratic space" in the course of everyday politics. Furthermore, modernization attenuates patron-client ties, raising the question of what basis citizens use for electoral choice.

Non-government Organizations (NGOs) can be central to addressing such topics in two ways. Some contemporary NGOs which focus on "people empowerment" have interpreted their mandate as extending beyond community affairs to electoral participation, and engage in both research and education towards "generating an electoral bloc that can significantly influence the elections for national positions and in certain specific localities."

A larger class of NGOs disdain such direct involvement in a process which they feel systematically disenfranchises grassroots organizations. Yet, even they operate in a context where their clientele takes seriously electoral exercises. Thus, they are not free to isolate themselves totally from elections, but must decide on how to relate to the electoral arena.

This paper reports on research into the interaction between NGOs and elections, using data regarding both varieties of NGO to document these assertions. Implications for Philippine politics are then drawn.

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The campaign leading to the 11 May 1992 election in the Philippines has generated media attention, thus far largely focused on the presidential candidates. This media attention is in keeping with a view of political participation which revolves around elections. Certainly, the most dramatic moment in recent Philippine political history—the 1986 regime change—was inextricably bound up in elections, and the Filipino's determination that elections be restored as free exercises of choice.

However, there have been many expressions of dissatisfaction with "traditional politics" since that epochal event. Some such expressions are simply the results of disagreement over what policies or personnel should be favored by the government. Others question the structure of what is being called "elite democracy."

This paper looks at one specific sector which expresses such dissatisfaction, non-government organizations (NGOs). First, there is some theoretical discussion of the nature and significance of Philippine elections, and of NGOs. Then, there are two sections devoted to two sorts of NGO activities—poll monitoring and more direct involvement in issue advocacy and candidate evaluation. Naturally, these two types of activity are hard to separate even conceptually, and are often engaged in by the same actors. Still, there are differences of emphasis which make it possible to separate these activities. In both of these sections, I will indicate some limits on the impact these NGOs are likely to have. Finally, some implications for Philippine politics are discussed.

Theoretical Discussion

1. *Elections and their Limits*

Traditional Philippine political behavior has been viewed within a patron-client framework, where the politicians as patron extracts support from voters in exchange for concrete benefits. A result of the structured inequality in society, patron-client relations partook of the nature of "unequal friendships" in order to form enduring bonds which cut across classes. These links formed the base for pyramids, as local patrons became clients of those higher up, providing political support in return for governmental largess. These aggregations were then the basis for competing parties. However, since the higher-level links were largely instrumental, the groupings were unstable resulting

in a high level of "turncoatism." Personalism dominated the political scene.

A number of problems with this model have been cited.¹ For instance, there is a body of literature asserting that patron-client ties have broken down under the impact of modernization. Capitalist agriculture is said to have resulted in landlords treating the rural populace as economic assets to be dealt with on a cash basis, rather than clients to whom considerations (such as food rations before harvest) should be extended. Migration to the city has put citizens out of the reach of traditional patrons. A growing middle class has meant more competition for offices, reducing the stability of factions.

Thus, there is reason to believe that if ever the patron-client model of politics held, its validity is eroding over time. If mobilization of voters by patrons has gone the way of Humpty Dumpty, we now have the question of precisely how are votes mobilized?

One possible alternative to personalist ties between politicians and clients is the organized political party. It should be clear that Philippine political parties are not now, and will not be for the foreseeable future, viable alternatives for structuring political action at the mass level.² While the elite may dance to the tune of party labels, this only means that parties retain their traditional nature as convenient vehicles for the personal ambition of office seekers.

Another, more fundamental criticism of the patron-client model is that it concentrates on elections to the exclusion of other arenas for political behavior (Kerkvliet, 1990). Much activity relevant to the allocation of resources goes on between, or even in spite of elections. This point has merit which goes beyond the intrinsic importance of "everyday politics," as can be seen from a consideration of the inherent limitations of elections as indicators for policy decisions.

Beyond the weaknesses of political parties, there are in fact inherent limitations on the ability of electoral exercises to transmit citizen preferences on substantive issues. Most elections revolve around the choice of office-holder. A vote for a particular politician does not indicate why that alternative was chosen. Thus, while politicians regularly claim mandates, and pundits regularly attribute such imperatives to electoral returns, this is not a valid reading. Voters may have agreed with only one part of the candidate platform, or different groups agreed with different segments, or perhaps the candidate was chosen for non-policy reasons.

Elections are indeed the way offices of political power are filled. And the fact that this method is used for conferring political power does affect the behavior of power seekers, and citizens who relate to these. Even the dynamics of everyday politics is affected by the fact that offices are allocated by elections (Kerkvliet, 1990:13). However, since elections do not dictate policy choices, other mechanisms for putting forth issues inevitably intervene. "Interest groups" is the generic name political science has given to groups articulating issues. This paper is devoted to one variety, non-government organizations (NGOs), and how they relate to the electoral process.

2. *NGOs and Elections*

Politicians and bureaucratic actors who do care about citizen views naturally turn to the organized sectors. Civic groups of all sorts, or media practitioners, are welcomed into the decision-making process and treated as representatives of the public interest. This leaves open the question as to the extent to which such sectors accurately reflect the more general populace.

Increasingly, government is receptive to the involvement of a new variety of group, known as NGOs. Beginning with the use of NAMFREL to monitor the progress of government projects, the current administration has had many initiatives along this line. NGOs are represented in Regional Development Councils, People's Economic Councils have a "desk" devoted to them in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and so on. However, these efforts often reach only the more traditional, elite non-government institutions, such as the Bishops-Businessmen Conference, Chambers of Commerce, the Philippine Business for Social Progress, and other groups dominated by local elites. Often, then, the government's efforts (either wittingly or unwittingly) fail to connect with grassroots NGO activists.

These grassroots activists can then engage in a variety of tactics in order to enhance developmental prospects. David Korten (1990: Chapter 10) speaks of four different "generations" of NGOs, with increasing attention to the wider context within which NGO activity takes place. Beginning with a focus on relief and welfare, NGOs moved on to community development, and then to sustained system development (which dealt with institutional and policy constraints). The fourth, emerging generation, now includes "people's

movements." The tactics such movements can use depends considerably on the political context within which they work.

A crucial political context is the electoral allocation of power. The basic function of elections is to focus office holders' attention on the need to secure votes in order to remain in power. As long as uncertainty prevails about who will win, this basic function is fulfilled (Przerworski, 1986: 58-60). This is a very minimal definition of what is needed in an election. The securing of votes can happen in any number of ways—through force and fraud, through vote buying, through personalist ties, through generalized policy appeals, or through alliances with organized groupings (whether parties, movements, or NGOs).

This open characterization naturally leads to a concern with the quality of elections, and what citizens can do to help ensure it. The spectacular success of NAMFREL in the mid-1980s led to a successful attempt to absorb its leaders into the Aquino government, and an unsuccessful attempt to replicate NAMFREL enthusiasm in monitoring government projects such as the Community Employment Development Program (CEDP). NAMFREL continues to be active in monitoring the 1992 election, an effort which is discussed below.

Debates have occurred on the emphasis which movements for social change should give to electoral participation. In the past, efforts such as that of the "Alliance for New Politics" in 1987 have suffered from some ambivalence: are the candidates running in order to win, or in order to educate the public? This ambivalence seems a recipe for disaster, and hence some have argued that progressive organizations must participate seriously in elections to be taken seriously by the Filipino public, which affords electoral results considerable legitimacy. (See the discussions by Walden Bello and James Goodno in Flamiano and Goertzen [1990:49-50].)

The activist alternative also fits naturally into the concerns of NGOs. NGO activists speak of the structural defects which give rise to the policy conflicts in which they are engaged. Contemporary NGOs often focus on "people empowerment," which some have interpreted as extending beyond community affairs to electoral participation. Thus, an "electoral movement of the NGO community" called "Project 2001" has been launched. The aim is to do both research and education to "organize our grassroots constituencies into a voting bloc that can influence the 1992 elections." (Project 2001: 1991c) This effort will also be discussed below.

3. Problems of Definition

Up to this point I have been writing as if the definition of an "NGO" is unproblematical. Any reader of the literature on the subject will affirm that this is not the case, inasmuch as almost all writings include a discussion of problems of definition. This paper is no different in that regard.

I will begin with David Korten's (1990:2) presentation of his Table I-1.

Table I-1: Types of NGOs

The term NGO embraces a wide variety of organizations. They include:

- **Voluntary Organization (VOs)** that pursue a social mission driven by a commitment to shared values.
- **Public Service Contractors (PSCs)** that function as market-oriented nonprofit businesses serving public purposes.
- **People's Organizations (POs)** that represent their members' interests, have member-accountable leadership, and are substantially self-reliant.
- **Governmental Nongovernmental Organizations (GONGOs)** that are creations of government and serve as instruments of governmental policy.

This definitional exercise is typical in two ways. First, it assumes, but does not state, that some groupings which are organized, and which are not part of government, are nonetheless not NGOs. When writing for the general public, it is sometimes explicitly stated (Goertzen, 1991:20):

While civic, religious and business groups are also in some sense "nongovernmental organizations," and do occasionally engage in development work, they are generally not thought of as NGOs.

This distinction, upon which persons involved in NGOs rely, is not necessarily visible to the mass public. As we will see in data to be reported upon later, civic and religious organizations made up thirty-two percent of organizations mentioned in response to a question about "private organizations/NGO."

The second way in which Korten's Table I-1 is typical is to distinguish government-oriented organizations from other kinds of NGOs. In contemporary Philippines, these are more often called "GRINGOs;" for Government Run-Initiated NGOs (e.g., Constantino-David, 1991). In the Philippine setting, the KABISIG movement launched by President Aquino is the most prominent manifestation of this type of NGO.

In other ways, however, Korten's classification is not typical of those currently in use in the Philippines. In particular, Philippine usage often (but unfortunately for clarity's sake, not always) distinguishes NGOs from POs. (This distinction is made elsewhere, such as in Frantz [1987], writing about Brazil.) Aldaba (1992), for instance, refers to POs as grassroots organizations which are the beneficiaries of the services provided by the NGOs. In this paper, I will be focusing largely on NGOs, as distinguished from POs, but will briefly deal with BAYAN, which is composed largely of POs.

Finally, let me note that even Korten (1990:102) admits that:

it can be difficult to tell the difference between a VO and a PSC, except when the organization is faced with a choice between social mission and market share. At this point the true VO will opt for the former, while the PSC will opt for the latter.

In short, it is a question of values. The largest grouping of NGOs in the Philippines, the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), finesses this problem by repeatedly stressing the modifier, "development." The CODE-NGO also stipulated at length what sort of development was envisioned, in the "Covenant on Philippine Development" adopted in the "1st National NGO Congress" on 4 December 1991.

In this paper, I will not limit myself to these development NGOs, though the CODE-NGO will figure prominently.

Electoral Monitoring

When speaking of NGO involvement in Philippine elections, the example which is probably most prominent is the efforts of the National Citizen's Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). Particularly in the 1986 presidential election, some of the most dramatic moments came when NAMFREL volunteers tried to protect the ballot

boxes, or when the NAMFREL Board confronted Marcos supporters on live television.

After the Aquino government took power, NAMFREL's head, Jose Concepcion, joined the cabinet as Secretary of Trade and Industry. (He has since resigned, and is now running for the Senate.) This, and other associations of NAMFREL members with the new administration led to accusations of bias.

These accusations took a particularly virulent turn with the public presentation of a report by Luzviminda Tancangco in early 1991. This report accused NAMFREL of complicity in fraud during the 1987 election in order to support candidates of the Aquino administration. It concluded that "NAMFREL's continued existence could only lead to a monopolistic structure at the great disadvantage of the opposition parties." (Tancangco, 1991:194-1195).

An immediate storm broke out in the academic community over the quality of the report. NAMFREL (1991:5) was able to quote from such professors as Felipe Miranda, "NAMFREL fraud is not substantiated in the Tancangco report." NAMFREL's summary is (NAMFREL, 1991:4):

The Tancangco report is part of a systematic attempt to discredit NAMFREL. Why? Because NAMFREL was successful in containing cheats and exposing electoral fraud in 1984, 1986, and 1987.

The Tancangco report was NEVER a U.P. [University of the Philippines] study. Furthermore, the verdict of the U.P. in its symposium of April 3, 1991 very incisively debunked the report.

In the event, the outbreak of the controversy did not prevent the head of NAMFREL, Christian Monsod, from being appointed Chairman of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) (against which Tancangco [191:143] had specifically argued.

NAMFREL continues to organize for the 1992 elections, in order to monitor polling places. However, judgment seems unanimous that NAMFREL's image has been tarnished by the dispute, whether or not any such charges are justified.

There is a larger umbrella organization, the Citizens for Orderly, Meaningful, and Peaceful Elections (COMPEL). This organization includes NAMFREL, Project 2001 (to be discussed in the next section), and other organizations. It was designed as a "coordinating

mechanism," and as such it has been overshadowed by its member organizations. While it hoped to undertake "proactive coalition projects that will increase the impact of the members' efforts," the projects of member organizations have taken first priority. Thus, for instance, NAMFREL is going ahead with its process of setting up monitoring activities as if it was not a member of the organization.

NAMFREL will not be engaging in any unofficial count of the votes, as it did in the 1986 election. Rather, this function has been taken over by the "Media-Citizens' Quick Count" (MCQC). This combines media organizations with prominent citizens in an attempt to count the votes and publicize their results. Not only has MCQC been accredited by the COMELEC, but its status is reinforced by R.A. 7166, "An Act Providing for Synchronized National and Local Elections...." Section 29, "Number of Copies of Certificates of Canvass and their Distribution:"

(4) the fourth copy shall be given to the citizens arm designed by the Commission to conduct a media-based unofficial count.

Also deeply involved in poll monitoring are Catholic organizations such as the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) (Isberto, 1992). This organization has the blessing of Jaime Cardinal Sin of the Archdiocese of Manila. Similar organizations are set up elsewhere, such as the *Tignayan dagiti Umili ti Cordillera* (Movement of Citizens of the Cordillera, TUC) by Bishop Salgado of the Mountain Province.

These organizations focus both on instructions to voters on how to safeguard the ballot, and on how to choose candidates. The one topic flows inseparably to the other. Voters are repeatedly asked not to sell their vote ("*Mortal Sin 'ata 'yan!*" "That's a mortal sin!" (PPCRV, 1991:341), and instructed that the vote should be regarded as valuable and thus be protected, and used wisely. Naturally, the exhortation to "use the vote wisely" has involved coming up with guidelines on how to choose candidates. The PPCRV, for instance, has the following criteria (Isberto, 1992:114):

Personal Attributes (40 percent) Service and Platform (20 percent)
Disqualifications (20 percent) Track Record (20 percent)

Thus, we can see that this sort of effort can be cast in a "non-partisan" mode by focusing on individual candidates, and largely on their personal attributes. The category "disqualifications" has mostly to

do with personal characteristics such as corruption, immorality, and being power hungry, leaving at most 40 percent attached to policy issues ("service and platform, " "track record"). We will see later some profound desire to deal with policy issues as part of a more direct involvement with the substance of elections.

Before turning to the next topic, I should like to conclude with some considerations of the limitations of these efforts to monitor elections. In the first place, despite repeated efforts to get organized in 1991, no organization had volunteers monitoring the registration of new voters on 1 February 1992.) Basically, the number of new registrants was seen to be abnormally high, leading to accusations of "flying registrants." Complete re-listings were ordered in parts of Metro Manila and elsewhere. In other words, if vote fraud begins with the registration process, citizens' watchdog groups were not yet ready to cut it off at its source.

The second limitation is particular to the Church, which is pouring a lot of effort into safeguarding the ballot. It seems universally unrecognized by Church activists, but it is a fact that their efforts are often resented by the average voter. If we look at data gathered by the Social Weather Station in November 1991, we have the following responses:

May the Church or Religions do the following regarding the 1992 elections, or may they not?

	<i>May</i>	<i>May Not</i>
<i>Participate in groups that watch election proceedings.</i>	40%	60%
<i>Choose candidates to support.</i>	24%	76%
<i>Write about the elections.</i>	21%	76%
<i>Deliver sermons from the pulpit about the elections.</i>	15%	85%

From these data, we see that the mildest form of church action is rejected by a 60-40 margin.

In a way, this limitation resembles the problem of NAMFREL: a credibility problem, whether deserved or not. The difference is that these feelings of the public are not being taken into account by the Church groups. Church activists are either ignorant of them, or dismiss them as a misunderstanding of the mission of the Church.

The third limitation has to do with the fact that the organizations discussed are essentially special-purpose ones, designed for the electoral season. Even those involved admit this limitation. Granted, there are repeated efforts to monitor performance (NAMFREL's Bantay ng Bayan Foundation, Inc. is an attempt.) But these do not generate as much attention, or volunteer enthusiasm, as do the electoral activities.

Direct Electoral Involvement

In this section, we look at attempts to harness volunteer enthusiasm which exists between elections, for purposes of involving NGOs directly in the substantive electoral process.

The electoral monitoring dealt with in the previous section is merely the 1992 manifestation of earlier behavior patterns. The participants are trying to learn from the past, to update and improve their activities, but they are not engaged in any radically new work.

However, the ferment in the NGO community has given rise to increased discussion of the question of how NGOs should involve themselves. Research has gone into how candidates supported by NGOs fared (Clamor, 1992; Cross and Caret, 1992). Policy agenda have been formulated, and candidates challenged to respond.³

The longest part of this section deals with the example of Project 2001. But I also want briefly to deal with the enigma of Bayan and the Partido ng Bayan, as we ask ourselves what has been learned over the years. Finally, I once again deal with the questions of limitations.

1. *Project 2001 as the "Electoral Expression" of CODE-NGO*

In early 1991, the NGO community was grappling with electoral questions, in January 1991, the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) held a conference on "The Role of NGOs in Building Democracy." (CODE-NGO, 1991a) In February, Project 2001, "An Electoral Movement of the NGO Community," was formed during a conference held at Ateneo's Institute for Social Order. Later, these two streams were merged when CODE-NGO recognized Project 2001 as its "electoral expression." Thus, to understand the significance of Project 2001 we need to understand the significance of CODE-NGO.

Since the mid-1980s, there have been moves to channel more Official Development Assistance (ODA) through NGOs. In pursuit of this idea in their country planning, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) invited Philippine NGO networks to a consultation. This began the process of coalition building, and by July 1990 the CODE-NGO was announced (and registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission in January 1991). (Aldaba, 1991)

The ten networks in the CODE-NGO are:

- Association of Foundations (AF)
- Council for People's Development (CPD)
- Ecumenical Center for Development (ECD)
- National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO)
- National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)
- National Council for Social Development (NCSD)
- National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA)
- Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA)
- Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP)
- Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in the Rural Areas (PHILDHARRA)

We can see from this list that we have Catholic, Protestant, and secular groupings, which range from the relatively conservative to the relatively radical.

Given this range, it is not surprising that since its formation they "placed much attention on building consensus across to [sic] 10 networks." (Constantino-David, 1991:8) The end product was the adoption of a "Covenant on Philippine Development" at the First NGO Congress on 4 December 1991. (CODE-NGO, 1991b:appendix). This attempts to spell out principles of development that are people-centered, sustainable, and nationalistic.

What the Covenant does not do is to spell out what actions NGOs should take in relation to the 1992 elections. This was left to another organization, Project 2001. Project 2001 initially received its impetus from a February 1991 meeting. The most prominent personality involved was former Secretary-designate of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Florencio Abad. After he failed to win confirmation from Congress, he set up his own NGO (Kaisahan) to continue his work. At this February meeting, and other fora (see CODE-NGO, 1991a), he urged more active participation of NGOs in the upcoming

election. Abad, in his speech to the Conference (Project 2001, 1991a: Annex C) put the matter bluntly:

Beyond opportunities for raising popular consciousness, for reaching the unorganized, for strengthening the organized, and for testing capabilities for mobilization, we aim to achieve key electoral victories (his emphasis).

Project 2001 personnel characterize the first four opportunities (consciousness raising, organizing, strengthening, mobilizing) as those which NGOs and POs extract from the electoral setting—when they are not boycotting entirely. What makes this effort different is the emphasized aim—electoral victories—even if the effort must extend in time to the year 2001.

In a later leaflet (1991b) Project 2001 listed “Modes of Intervention.”

- A. Electoral Reforms
- B. Electoral Research
- C. Platform Development
- D. Voter Education
- E. Criteria for Candidate Selection
- F. Endorsement of Candidates
- G. Poll Watching

It is with regard to (E), and particularly (F), that most unease arose within the NGO community. Abad, at the end of his speech, pointed out the problem.

Involvement in partisan activity may compromise an NGO in either of two ways: if the party or roster of candidates supported by the NGO sector triumphs, the sector's traditional fiscalizing role may be diluted; if an adversarial party emerges victorious, this might make the NGO sector a more vulnerable target. For these reasons, it is necessary to be creative and adept in setting up appropriate mechanisms that will enable NGOs to engage directly in partisan politics with the most minimum possible risk to its credibility, autonomy, and survival.

An unmentioned problem was the fear of NGOs being used by politicians for the latter's own ends—a fear which was exacerbated by the widespread expectation that Abad himself would be a candidate (he is now running for the Senate under the Pambansang Koalisyon—LP/PDP-Akbayan).

NGO reluctance to engage in partisan politics surfaced in several ways. One was the question from the floor of the 3 December Project 2001 Conference on "Issues in the 1992 Election" as to why certain candidates (Estrada, Salonga, Pimentel) were invited to address the Conference on "Issues in the 1992 Election," and others (Defensor-Santiago) were not. (The answer was that only those "presidentiables" opposed to the U.S. bases were invited.) Another manifestation of reluctance occurred when Project 2001 asked the member networks of CODE-NGO to conduct "straw votes" on candidates. The networks refused, pointing out that when CODE-NGO designated Project 2001 as its "electoral expression" all that was being committed were *some* of the modes of intervention, not necessarily all (especially (F) Endorsement of Candidates).

The end result of this interaction is a certain distance between CODE-NGO and Project 2001. Despite taking place on the next day, in the same venue, the proceedings of the 1st NGO Congress (CODE-NGO, 1991b) makes no mention of the previous day's Project 2001 Conference. And, when CODE-NGO took out a two page advertisement to publicize the "Covenant on Philippine Development" (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 31 January 1992:21-22), it felt constrained to add a preface:

CODE-NGO—the largest coalition of Development NGOs and networks—wishes to publicly state that CODE-NGO HAS NOT ENDORSED ANY CANDIDATES (their emphasis).

In order to avoid a complete break with CODE-NGO, Project 2001 did not endorse any candidates. This restraint frustrated some members of Project 2001, and they joined a new grouping, *Kaakbay ng Sambayanan* (AKBAYAN).

AKBAYAN includes individuals and groups which had been urging a coalition of progressive candidates, and which had some part in Senator Pimentel's decision to be the vice presidential candidate of Senator Salonga of the Liberal Party instead of pursuing his presidential candidacy as the PDP-Laban candidate. AKBAYAN is now the third member of the Pambansang Koalisyon, attempting to organize those who are willing to support these candidates openly. And (AKBAYAN, 1992):

AKBAYAN adopts as its own the development agenda generated by the National Peace Conference, People's Caucus, Green Forum, Project 2001, and CODE-NGO.

In short, AKBAYAN seeks to represent the NGO community substantively, as well as in power seeking.

The story leading to AKBAYAN's formation can be summarized as follows. Faced with upcoming elections, there were attempts to bridge the gap between the arena of NGO local-level, day to day activity and the electoral arena. This was in the context of concerted efforts of NGOs to organize themselves into national coalitions and to put forth unified agenda. However, even parts of the NGO community most active in coalition-building and agenda development balk at direct partisan involvement in elections. Thus, individuals bent in this latter task had to break away from their institutional mooring and participate in a special-purpose organization set-up to join the Pambansang Koalisyon.

2. *The Left (Bayan and PnB) and the Right (KABISIG)*

Before discussing the limitations which plague any attempt to add NGOs as a force in electoral activities, I would like briefly to examine activities on the left, and on the right, which might have been expected also to add new elements to the 1992 campaign. However, both sets of activities demonstrate more continuity than change in Philippine politics.

As noted above, the left has been accused of being ambivalent about elections, and thus automatically being ineffective. There seems to be no reason to change this assessment. Etta P. Rosales wrote (1992:8), "the active participation of the citizenry in the [election] exercise must be encouraged," while the media picked up the photo of the banner, "*Rebolusyon, Hindi Eleksyon* (Revolution, not Election)" at the BAYAN (*Bagong Alyansang Makabayan*—New Nationalist Alliance) launching of their "alternative campaign." (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 10 February 1992:1). The muddle was aptly summarized in an account of a 10 March demonstration:

Meanwhile, BAYAN clarified that the antielection slogan, "Rebolusyon, Hindi Eleksyon" does not mean their group is encouraging voters to boycott the election. It calls for "critical participation" in the polls. (Philippine Daily Globe, 11 March 1992:6)

The same ambivalence is shown with regard to support for candidates. When the Liberal Party and the PDP-Laban coalition was announced, it was reported:

According to Jose Virgilio Bautista, spokesman of the left-wing Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, the coalition provides an alternative to the proverbial devil-and-deep-blue-sea situation. (Philippine Daily Globe, 7 January 1992:5)

However, BAYAN has not endorsed the candidacy of Salonga and Pimentel, and "national democratic" groups did not join AKBAYAN.

Finally, the left's own candidates have shown the same ambivalence. The PnB (*Partido ng Bayan*—People's Party) had two candidates file for the Senate by the 7 February deadline—human rights lawyer Romeo Capulong, and KMU *Kilusang Mayo Uno*, May First Movement) head Crispin Beltran. However, as of this writing they have already withdrawn from the race. As of now, the left is not participating directly in national-level candidcies.

The relevance of the KABISIG movement for the 1992 elections can be even more briefly stated. The movement was launched by President Aquino at the 1990 Independence Day celebrations, as a way of harnessing NGO and PO energy for government projects. From the beginning, speculation persisted that this was a move aimed at getting around Congressional obstructionism with regard to administration programs, and at forming political organizations for the 1992 election. Thus, in the rivalry between House Speaker Ramon Mitra and former Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, the KABISIG movement was seen as a potential power base for the latter. This speculation was intensified after President Aquino endorsed Ramos to be her successor.

However, such speculation has turned to naught, as the personnel of the KABISIG movement split. In particular, Bulacan Governor Roberto Pagdanganan—widely seen as one of the prime movers behind KABISIG—has endorsed Ramon Mitra for president. Thus, a movement which attempted to link NGOs and politicians (from the politician's side) has proven to be just as prone to splits and realignments as the political parties of which politicians are so enamored.

3. Limitations on the impact of NGO Electoral Involvement

In the section on electoral monitoring (above, pp.8-9), I pointed out some of the limitations of efforts there. In this subsection, I should like to add two more sorts of limitations—limited NGO visibility,

and some contradictions between normal NGO roles and electoral roles.

The activities chronicled in the above, of CODE-NGO and Project 2001, have remarkably little resonance in the media and the mass public. (We should note that the media *do* pay a good deal of attention to the activities of BAYAN and KABISIG.)

As can be gathered from the text of this paper, the first week of December 1991 saw an extraordinary series of NGO activities. The Project 2001 Conference on "Issues in the 1992 Election" was on 3 December; the First NGO Conference (CODE-NGO, 1991b) was on 4 December; and the "Multi-Sectoral Forum of the People's Agenda for Development and Democracy" (which resulted in the publication of the said *Agenda*) was on 5 December.

The media virtually ignored these activities. A check of the 3 to 9 December issues of *Manila Bulletin*, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Philippine Star*, *Businessworld*, and *Philippine Daily Globe*⁴ showed one front-page story in the *Star* (which treated the three events as one three-day convention) and two treatments by one of the columnists in the *Inquirer*. Otherwise, the events created no ripples.⁵

Not surprisingly, the limited coverage by media is echoed by limited recognition at the mass level. In a November 1991 national survey conducted by the Social Weather Station, those persons who could respond to the question "Here in your area, what is the most important organization/NGO that helps people" represented only twenty percent of the public. And, as we noted when dealing with definitions of NGOs, about one-third of these twenty percent were speaking about civic or religious groups, not "development NGOs."

Thus, the nation-wide visibility of the development NGO community is quite low. This is connected to the contradictions between what these NGOs normally do, and their electoral participation. NGOs typically see their strength in autonomous action in specific local problems, at which they can be very efficient. Recognizing the limits on such action, however, some wish to link up into broader coalitions, to "look beyond focused initiatives aimed at changing specific policies and institutional sub-systems." (Korten, 1990:127) Yet, this is a radically different sort of action for NGOs.

Even Korten admits that NGOs who try to mobilize in support of this "social vision" are those who began with this strategy, not those

which had been engaged in other work and shifted to this "fourth generation" strategy. However, as we have seen, tensions arise when activists like those who initiated Project 2001 try to enlist existing NGOs, like CODE-NGO, no matter how ideologically compatible these groups may be.

In short, the shift from issue advocacy to electoral participation has been hard for NGOs to make.

Implications

We can make the overall judgment that much of NGO activity relevant to the 1992 election is not unprecedented. This can be brought into relief by citing well known political science definitions of two activities: interest articulation and interest aggregation (Almond & Powell, 1978: Chapters VII and VIII):

The political process is set in motion when some group or individual makes a political demand. This process of demand making is called interest articulation. (page 169)

The function of converting demands into major policy alternatives is called interest aggregation. Demands become major policy alternatives when they are backed by substantial political resources (page 198).

In the terminology used in the Philippines, NGOs are performing their advocacy function when they are articulating interests. And, much of what NGOs are doing during the election process amounts to just this. However, NGO activity can be termed interest aggregation when two further steps are taken: combining demands into larger policy alternatives, and then producing the political resources to back them.

We have seen that NGOs are engaged in the first step to an unprecedented degree. The activity is usually called "constructing people's agendas." The most prominent end results thus far are the "Covenant for Philippine Development" (CODE-NGO, 1991b) and the "People's Agenda for Development and Democracy" (CSP/PA, 1992). The processes which produced these two documents were somewhat different. CODE-NGO engaged in a year-long process of consultation and consensus building among its ten networks, so that by 4 December 1991 the document was ready for signing. CSP/PA, on the other hand,

followed a somewhat more technocratic mode of construction, in which experts were called on as consultants to insure that the demands being put forward by the several NGOs were not inconsistent.

The second step, mobilizing political resources, are more similar for these two efforts. For both, candidates are presented with the document and asked to comment, or even to commit themselves. CODE-NGO, naturally, is doing this more at a grassroots level, through the member networks. While CSP/PA is operating more at the level of media (see end note 3).

The end result seems to be a more careful focus on issues than in previous election campaigns. Whether or not we dismiss politicians' utterances as mere rhetoric, it certainly is true that they concern themselves relatively frequently with policy issues. The fact that vocal elites are continually constructing these agendas, and asking candidates to comment on them, has had an effect. This is a new development.

However, the limits on direct involvement in partisanship are reflective of considerable continuity in politics. As one speaker put it, the NGO community has not yet moved beyond the "power of principles" to the "principle of power." Put less dramatically, the mobilization of resources to back political alternatives has not, for NGOs, been dependent on electoral success. And, as explained above, many NGOs are reluctant to abandon their traditional autonomy from the electoral arena.

The consequence, for the moment, is that the electoral arena is dominated by electoral politicians, with only some few references to the NGOs. It may be that, in the future, the institution of a party-list system for some Congressional seats (supposed to be in place for the 1998 Congress) may change this situation. In that eventuality, when smaller groups can get candidates elected, NGOs may be more likely to take the plunge of electoral activity. Certainly, some of the moving spirits behind Project 2001 are hoping that this is the case.

In sum, NGOs seem somewhat successful in forcing the pace of change when we consider the injection of policy issues into electoral campaigns. In the meantime, however, the electoral arena exhibits considerable continuity with the past.

ENDNOTES

¹Kervkleit and Mojares (1991:8-11) have a discussion "Questioning the Factional Model" with relevant citations. In addition, Scott (1972) provides a dynamic version of the patron-client model. I have pointed out the limited patron-client coverage of the citizenry in Baguio City, and the instability of factions (Rood, 1991:97, 1011-102).

²The entire paper is devoted to the discussion of legal, above-ground politics and does not consider the case of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

³*SINO sa Mayo* ("Who in May?") was the most spectacular of these exercises. Ateneo's Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs presented their agenda (CSP/PA, 1992) to presidential and vice-presidential candidates on 2 March, and asked them to comment. Publicity was generated by a half-page advertisement (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 19 February 1992:12). In the event, candidates Mitra, Salonga and Pimentel, and Ramos and Osmeña showed up, while Laurel sent Homobono Adaza as a spokesperson. At least one network TV evening news program showed footage of the event.

⁴Due to the vagaries of newspaper deliveries to Baguio, I was unable to check the 5 December *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and the 6, 8, and 9 December *Philippine Daily Globe*.

⁵The higher overall coverage of *SINO sa Mayo* noted in [3], above, was probably due to the fact that the event was explicitly part of the presidential campaign.

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