



Philippine Sociological Review

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Organizational Form and Strategies, and Collective Identity

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the Anti-Marcos Movements

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RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

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Greenpeace Philippines

María Kristine O. Alvarez

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INTRODUCTION	iii
Transnational Social Movement: Examining its Emergence, Organizational Form and Strategies, and Collective Identity Ma. Glenda Lopez Wui	1
The International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Anti-Marcos Movements Arjan Aguirre	25
WALK: Framing a Successful Agrarian Reform Campaign in the Philippines Lennart Niemelä	49
Philippine Catholicism as Disruptive Public Religion: A Sociological Analysis of Philippine Catholic Bishops' Statements, 1946 to 2000 Roberto E. N. Rivera, S.J.	75
RESEARCH IN PROGRESS	
On Deviance and Loving Nature: A Case Study of the Ecological Activism of Greenpeace Philippines Maria Khristine O. Alvarez	97

INTRODUCTION

Time and again, the aggrieved in society resort to collective actions which are outside the purview of the legal structure to change their current social and/or political conditions. Whether these take the form of spontaneous mob actions or organized social movements, these collective activities can exert significant pressure on the authorities to effect changes in the status quo.

This issue of the *Philippine Sociological Review* focuses primarily on how social movement organizations, both international and local, helped facilitate the opening of the democratic space in the country in the 1980s and since then, empowered the poor and marginalized sectors of society not only to check and balance the state but also promote corporate social responsibility; albeit through nonviolent means. Using a combination of political opportunity and resource mobilization models, the first essay, *Transnational Social Movement: Examining its Emergence, Organizational Form and Strategies*, and *Collective Identity* by **Ma. Glenda Lopez Wui** discussed how the phenomenon of globalization has led to the recent growth of transnationalization of political mobilization and changed the way that social movement organizing is undertaken. These led to the shift of the locus of protests from the local to the international arena as transnational entities and actors, including “transnational corporations, international non-government organizations, transnational banks, and global criminal networks, pose challenge to states as predominant players in the international arena” (Smith and Johnston 2002: 1-2 as cited by Wui). Wui further contended that the repertoire of protest activities have likewise expanded to include the use of communication technology and transnational media, which makes it easier for different international social movement organizations to engage in transnational activism. Nonetheless, she also acknowledged that while the protests have gone international, there is still a need to nurture the domestic arena since open political environment are important for the local social movement organizations (such as the civil society groups) which lend support to transnational activism to thrive. And here, the diffusion of ideas and values of transnational social movement organizations to the local social movement

organizations are crucial as they can also shape the repertoire of protest activities and their outcomes.

The second essay, *The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and the Anti-Marcos Movements* by **Arjan Aguirre** illustrates this. In his essay, Aguirre contended that the series of forums, seminars, and workshops on active nonviolence organized by IFOR from 1984 to the weeks leading to the 1986 EDSA revolution facilitated the diffusion of the principle and methods of active nonviolence to the anti-Marcos movements in the Philippines. Active nonviolence as a master protest frame resonated more effectively with the wide range of anti-Marcos groups and allowed for broader mass mobilization. This, in turn, led to the further opening of the domestic political opportunity structures that culminated in the EDSA Revolution of 1986.

Among those who have attended the lectures/seminars on nonviolence conducted by IFOR were the clergy, politicians, organizers, civic leaders, professionals, activists, academics, students and common folks. Some of them became the forerunners of a local nonviolence movement called AKKAPKA in 1984. AKKAPKA became instrumental in persuading the Marcos administration to conduct a Snap Election and in motivating the anti-Marcos movements to ensure a clean and honest election. It was also responsible for diffusing the growing tension between loyalist soldiers and rebel military men during the protest period that ensued after the election and have kept the EDSA Revolution relatively “peaceful.”

Active nonviolence as a protest master frame continues to be invoked by the more moderate social activists long after the EDSA Revolution has ended in 1986 until now. Since 1986, various strategies and tactics that subscribe to the active nonviolence frame have been employed by the organized marginalized sectors to call attention to their grievances. Among the more successful of these protest movements is Sumilao Walk of 2001 wherein farmers from Sumilao, Bukidnon walked 1,700 kilometers from their community to Manila to win back the 144 hectares of land that should have been distributed to them via the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). This is discussed in the third essay, *WALK: Framing a Successful Agrarian Reform Campaign in the Philippines* by **Lennart Niemelä**. According to Niemelä, one of the factors that contributed to the success of the Sumilao Walk was the support of the Catholic Church leaders who provided the farmers with shelter and the opportunities to talk about their situation, and mediated on their behalf with the representatives of the state. This support nonetheless

was obtained through a conscious employment of frame bridging, frame amplification and frame transformation. Through “walking,” the Sumilao farmers were able to provide the symbolic link between the physical hardships of being a farmer with that of actively doing something about their grievance, thereby eliciting sympathy among their fellow farmers who knew the difficulties of tilling the land, and promoting the conscientization of the urban dwellers. Walking as a tactic of active nonviolence likewise amplified the social injustice committed against these farmers that it was transformed into moral concern which the Philippine Catholic Church has to address, if it was to live up to the role of “disruptive activism.”

In his essay, *Philippine Catholicism as Disruptive Public Religion: A Sociological Analysis of Philippine Catholic Bishops’ Statements, 1946 to 2000*, **Fr. Robert Rivera, SJ** discussed how the Catholic Church, in dealing with the social realities of the Philippine society, facilitated the development of Catholicism as a “public religion,” albeit very slowly. By using its pastoral and teaching authorities, the Catholic Church has influenced not only the strategies and tactics of the Philippine social movements, but also helped the latter in confronting an authoritarian and/or corrupt state.

But even without support from a strong institution like the Catholic Church, social movement organizations do have certain advantage over other social institutions in pressing social concerns. This is because their expressions of grievance are tolerated even though they push the laws to their limits. To a certain extent, this is what **Maria Kristine O. Alvarez** argued in her essay, *On Deviance and Loving Nature: A Case Study of the Ecological Activism of Greenpeace Philippines*. In this work in progress, she examined the experiences of Greenpeace in “breaking the law,” albeit in nonviolent ways, in pursuing its environmental advocacy. Nonetheless, Alvarez pointed out that as experienced by Greenpeace, direct action in contravention of the law can be considered “lawful” when it seeks to expose and act against efforts that place people, ecosystems, and other living things in danger and when official channels of communication fail to produce just action. Barring these, extra-legal activities become merely just acts of “law-breaking.”

As it was decades ago, the Philippine society is still confounded with major social, political and economic issues and concerns that are left unresolved and/or unattended. This could only mean that some segments of the population who continue to feel marginalized or aggrieved will organize themselves and collectively clamor for and exert efforts aimed at bringing

large-scale changes. Depending on the political opportunities presented by their society, they will continue to mobilize support and engage in strategies and tactics that they hope will bring about change in their conditions. Understanding where this support would be coming from, how such support can be mobilized, and the extent to which they can push for their demands, will enable social scientists to rethink the process of social change in our society.

Liza L. Lim
Issue Editor