

THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICS AND THE POLITICS OF TRANSFORMATION¹

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The development of the modes of forest governance in Thailand and the Philippines followed a historical trajectory that saw the transformation of the way power is constituted and institutionalized in society. The process is by no means complete, in as much as the dynamic interplay between the State and civil society continues to be played in the arena of the political. The changes in forest policy, as manifestations of such interplay, reflected the interesting convergences as well as divergences of these two modes of institutionalization. As it appeared, the statist and civil society modes articulate as oppositional discourses in Thailand, while they have entered into some kind of guarded collaboration in the case of the Philippines.

At this point, whether civil societies are in the process of colonizing the State or the State is in the process of co-opting civil societies is a question that calls to attention the necessity for a structural analysis of the articulation. This question is very valid in the case of the Philippines. In Thailand, it is more relevant to speculate on the outcome of a possible legislation of community forestry into law, and how this would affect the oppositional nexus between State and civil society. Would the passage of a law signal a victory for civil society for having successfully “civilized” the State, or would it signal the beginning of the discourse and its bearers being co-opted by the State?

This paper ventures into political futuristics, specifically by looking at the transformations that have been occurring from the political “past” to the political “present” to be able to speculate about the “future” of politics as well as the politics of the “future.”

Transforming Politics: Expanding the Domain of the “Political”

The emergence of the State as a central apparatus for consolidating power became a historical milestone that marginalized civil society not only in the domain of political practice but also, and more importantly, in the domain of political theory. Much of the theorizing in political science has been focused on the State. The “political” was defined within the context of processes, which are involved in State building and maintenance,

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while “politics” was defined as what politicians do. Civil society, the “othered” domain was denied the theoretical attention it deserved and its existence prior to the development of the State was submerged in the hegemonic centrality of statist scholarship. While the recent focus on civil society does attempt to locate this powerful domain in the analysis, it nevertheless willingly propagates the view that civil society is a later “other,” a recent development that has resulted from the breakdown or inability of the State to govern. I am critical of this position, not only for its historical inaccuracy but also for its acquiescence to dominant Western political theory.

Civil society is community, and communities have existed prior to the State. The discourse of the Western liberal democratic theorists, which conflates civil society with civic mindedness, is a product of their historical tragedies of being consumed by individualistic pursuits that inevitably led to the diminishing of the community. One has to “volunteer” to become a citizen in this cultural context, as dramatized by people who shut their doors and windows and refused to intrude into the business of their neighbors in the name of privacy and individual liberties. To hoist a discourse of conjured communities and volunteered citizenship on social formations that have strong community institutions, such as in Thailand and the Philippines, with civil society activists and scholars in these countries buying such argument, is a tragic acquiescence to a Western imposition. The use of adjectives such as “emerging” and “voluntary” in referring to civil societies is mainly done by people who see the need to go beyond the discourse of rights and into the discourse of civic-mindedness to pursue collective goals.

However, in Thailand and the Philippines, the discourse of citizenship has long been forced on people, through the ruthless process of State building, ably aided by ideological institutions in civil society itself. In Thailand, the ideology of “nation, religion and King” was propagated as a cementing bond to inscribe into the Thai psyche a deep concept of “Thainess.” In the Philippines, the process of nation building necessitated the formation of a central identity, the “Filipino,” through educational and cultural institutions. Thus, the discourse of citizenship is an outcome of the desire to establish order, even as it created a condition that constricted the spaces for individual freedom and liberty.

The political struggle, therefore, in Thailand and in the Philippines, as in many other countries similarly situated, is not in terms of cultivating the ethic of citizenship but rather the ethic of participation and liberation. In fact, in an essay entitled “Freedom and Freehold: Space, People and State Simplification in Southeast Asia,” James Scott (1998) argued that in Southeast Asia, in general, the concept of freedom is found not in association with the State, but in the form of being free from its power. The discourse of rights and not the discourse of civic-mindedness should then be the more appropriate way of engaging the State. It is in this context that civil societies “re-emerge.”

The process of State building and maintenance, as the locus of the political in the context of the dominant and statist practice of Political Science, remains a valid area for launching academic inquiries and “praxical” interpellations. However, there is a need to redefine the manner in which such inquiries and interpellations are made. Post-

structuralist theorists, most notable of which is Michel Foucault, have long challenged the totalizing image of a central locus of power that needs to be assaulted. The explanatory power of “grand narratives” and “grand theories” has also been subjected to critical interrogation in post-modern theory. It is in this context that there is a need to re-imagine the “political.”

A civil society that gains validity only in the sense that it is able to restrain State power, which is the dominant theme of most of the definitions of civil society from Hegel to de Tocqueville to the UNDP, remains captive to a totalizing discourse. The mode of engaging the State rests on the assumption that civil society, as the “other” of the State, must be able to match the structures of the latter. As most activists point out, the goal of civil society is to nationalize its struggle, even internationalize it, on a common front. Federations, alliances and coalitions should become organizational necessities for them to succeed in providing the State its headaches and its challenges.

While there is indeed value in building a central movement to counter the discourse of the State, the question that needs to be asked is: What happens after civil society wins the battle? There are many possibilities, two of which are: that the State may be reformed to take up civil society agenda; and that the civil society, which is now a nationally organized structure matching the State, may claim victory by throwing out the present occupants. It should be emphasized however that in both cases, a central power still exists. A reformed State is still a State. In the second scenario, civil society may have captured the State, but it has now itself become a State, albeit run by people from civil society backgrounds.

What I am trying to emphasize in the above discussion is the fact that political struggles which are waged in the domain of statist assumptions of marginalization engender modes of resistance that are just inversions of the centralizing structure of power that they merely want to replace, but not deconstruct. Civil society activism at present not only in both Thailand and the Philippines but also elsewhere is increasingly taking up a centralizing organizational mode for consolidating its forces. The danger of bureaucratization and cooption is all too real.

For example, progressive NGOs that have been engendered by the community ethic, which resides in organic civil society, experience an erosion of such ethic whenever they attempt to expand and scale up their operations. An apt illustration from the Philippines is the case of a People’s Organization that decided to submit its project report to its funding agency, another NGO, in the form of a non-bureaucratic prose, which reflected the indigenous discourse of the mystical communities that inhabited the PO’s area of project operations. The funding NGO rejected the report because it did not match the format it prescribed. This is just one example of the many cases wherein the communitarian spirit prevailing in grassroots organizations is dampened when operations become subject to external funding.

Despite the above critique, we should not totally abandon political actions that seek to nationalize the advocacy by scaling up and expanding the domain of operations.

Nor is it a practical agenda to do away with the State. Instead, in order to achieve a transformation of the modes by which we are governed, we should change the manner we govern ourselves. Academic scholarships and political activism are not merely vocations which one takes. They are also domains for governance, wherein certain types of power arrangements and modes of legitimation operate. The choice of strategies for mobilization and the choice of theoretical perspectives to govern our inquiries into the problems confronting forest communities, for example, are also political choices. There is a need to relocate the political to make it defined not only in the context of our fight to transform the State but also of our production of our own discourses of resistance. This will necessarily lead to a relocation of the political away from totalizing grand narratives to what can be referred to as “radical pluralism” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). This transformation will allow us to wage collective action against the policies of the State on all fronts. We can wage it as organized national struggles carried by federations and alliances, as illustrated in the case of the community forestry movement in Thailand, and as a movement to establish a regional civil society. We can also wage it as local and everyday modes of coping and resistance through organic communities using ideological institutions nurtured and bred in their own local contexts.

The expansion of legitimate civil society movement to include localized struggles is an important dimension of the transformation of politics. This will require the recognition of organic processes as valid conduits for politics. Organic civil society institutions, such as those that reside in the sense of community, and the collective identification of people with their community, should be distinguished from the “organized” civil society groups. I enclose “organized” in quotations to show my discomfort of the adjective since it is valid to argue that even organic civil society institutions are organized systems of relationships, following certain logic, and so are not random or chaotic.

Mulder (1996) raised a scathing critique of the transformative power of organic civil societies, and instead gave preference to the necessity for organized movements to effectively challenge the State in the context of democratization. He labeled organic institutions as parochial, and that they create political indifference. While I agree with Mulder that, indeed, local coping mechanisms may provide ideological masks that tend to favor the reproduction of the status quo, I strongly disagree with his total rejection of organic institutions as potential sources of political transformation.

The problem with Mulder’s analysis is that the domain of transformation remains to be captured on a grand scale; that somewhat the barometer of success is the reality that local communities are only able to participate in national governance through massive democratization movements. This stems from the continued reliance on the State as the focus and locus of transformative politics. It is never the project of social movements to merely transform States and civil societies. What is more important is to transform the mode of governance, that is, how do we create and maintain order in our lives. This entails not only a movement to change institutions that are external to us, but also to change institutions near us and within us. It even entails changing ourselves.

The case of San Fernando, Bukidnon, in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao is instructive. The upland farmers mobilized, through external mediation by an NGO, against the logging operations which threatened their livelihoods, and in doing so aimed at the State's discourse of forest management. They succeeded in having the operations cancelled, and in forcing the State to give attention to their problems. Their success was however compromised by the lack of a community ethic that can sustain the collective action to achieve what it was supposed to, which is community resource management. Dissension, factionalism, and corruption within the community ensued.

The above case is evidence of the failure of a movement to transform the organic civil society institutions that governed the quality of social capital which are needed to sustain collective action. These "parochial," "informal" institutions are usually neglected in transformative projects, and just become afterthoughts. Political activism is just too preoccupied with national issues and concerns and external agents resulting in the exclusion and alienation of communities. They tend to forget that the State is just one adversary to contend with. In the final analysis, the enemy may be within themselves; in their social institutions and in the manner they constitute and institutionalize power within their communities and their lives.

Transforming the Mode of Constitution: The Need to Deepen the Democratization Process

The development of forest policies in Thailand and the Philippines occurred amidst the backdrop of political transformations. Forest policies and policy reforms emerged either as concessions of the State or as deliberate attempts to maintain legitimacy, or as honest attempts to democratize access to resources. However, it is a generalizable conclusion that the transformation in policy is reflective of the growing demands for participatory modes of governance, made possible only in pluralist modes of constituting power.

The process of building and maintaining the State rested on the deployment of mechanisms that achieved social order at the expense of individual rights. Some of the exclusionary strategies were actually deliberate attempts of the State to shut off and shoot down political participation, as in the case of the authoritarian experiences in Thailand's many coups and the Marcos experience in the Philippines. However, for the most part, the exclusion emerged from the structural forces that have developed during the pre-State phase of political development, and which were further elaborated on and constructed during the building and maintenance of the State. In Thailand, the royal absolutism that existed prior to the emergence of constitutional monarchy has put in place an elaborate and deeply rooted social fabric that was hierarchical and rigid, and has provided structural restraints on citizens to directly participate in State affairs. In the Philippines, the colonial legacy has left an elitist and exclusionary political lifescape that encumbered non-elites. Forest policies, in their initial stage, reflected this exclusionary mode of constituting power by centralizing access to resources, and by deploying instruments and mechanisms that sequestered control over these resources away from local communities.

These instruments structurally favored elite and urban interests, and were focused on capitalist ventures.

However, the political space that was closed at the beginning eventually unraveled and opened. The creeping effects of political modernization, influenced by liberal political thinking and given reason by authoritarian excesses, were manifested as fires that fueled democratization movements (Rigg and Stott 2000). The procession of military juntas in Thailand was punctuated and interrupted, and finally negated by democratization movements. The Marcos authoritarian rule ended through a massive demonstration of what soon was labeled as People Power, a historical conjuncture that saw the coming together of various sectors that were deeply involved in struggles to create space for political participation and the end to exclusionary and oppressive politics.

In both developments, civil society movements took the lead in dismantling the barriers that prevented citizens from participating in the affairs of governance. In Thailand, a new Constitution was written with active civil society participation while in the Philippines, civil society elements colonized State bureaucracies in the aftermath of the Marcos departure. The elitist mode of constituting power, seen in the bureaucratic authoritarianism of military juntas in Thailand and of Marcos in the Philippines, was challenged, and gave way to a pluralist mode wherein different spheres of interest representation, though unequal, were provided access to governance institutions. Subsequently, in Thailand, the then all too dominant forest bureaucracy had to contend with emerging oppositional discourses from civil society while in the Philippines, the forest bureaucracy unraveled and became the site for the articulation and resolution of debates.

Democratization movements that located their struggles on issues of political participation drove the transformation of the mode of constituting power from elitist to pluralist. Evidence suggests that this was achieved in the case of the Philippines and Thailand to the extent that the rituals of governance at the level of the State were reformed and democratized. One interesting development that occurred is the globalization of democratization processes. Civil society actors and groups began to participate actively in global and regional discussions. All major UN Conferences were held with parallel fora reserved for civil societies. Epistemic communities of scientists and advocates emerged to influence in turn the emergence and operationalization of global institutions, such as those addressing climate change and biodiversity. In the context of Track II diplomacy, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was organized to provide room for civil society participation in policy discussions. At present, efforts are being exerted to strengthen the environmental agenda of the forum.

However, the transition from elitist to pluralist modes remains incomplete, and there is still a complex array of articulated formations wherein elitist modes either dominate or exist in tandem with pluralist elements or pluralist pretensions. The statist locus of political analysis misses the deep cracks that inhabit the local sites where people's lives are governed beyond the ambit of the State and its bureaucracies. Despite

democratization, there are still prevailing exclusionary practices. Most of these are pervasive in State institutions. In Thailand, for example, the RFD remains a hierarchical, male-dominated closed community. In the Philippines, the opening of democratic spaces has been extended into bureaucratic domains. For example, gender sensitivity is now mainstreamed in the operations of the forest bureaucracy and the DENR. In fact, in 1999, the DENR was cited as the most gender-friendly government institution. However, this small opening remains merely as a segment present in an otherwise pervasively hierarchical, and still male-dominated structure of power. Bureaucracies, by their very nature, are hierarchical and male-ordered.

The tragedy of an incomplete democratization is more palpable, the argument for making such a case of which emanates from its sheer irony, within civil society institutions. It is indeed ironic that the academe, as a civil society institution taking the lead in the propagation of liberal ideas, continues to be governed by hierarchical and exclusionary structures. Although it should be quickly added that there are deliberative institutions within the academe, such as the University or Academic Councils and Faculty Senates, which provide venues for debate particularly on academic matters. However, the exclusionary character of the academe, specifically seen in forestry educational institutions, lies in its intolerance of alternative voices and ways. Radical perspectives and their bearers are marginalized and subjected either to being ignored or to institutionalized forms of harassment.

Also present is the clique notion of governance, wherein incumbent academic heads behave like traditional politicians in maintaining a cadre of “academic cronies” and in propagating politics of patronage by allocating academic appointments and recognition. The other, and more real example of irony is the academe failing to institutionalize what it preaches to others. A case in point is the College of Forestry and Natural Resources at the UPLB in the Philippines. As a chief advocate of community forestry, made visible by its curricular revisions and organizational restructuring along the line of strengthening social forestry and forest governance as an area of study and as an academic department, it is facing resistance from the communities that reside within its own University forests. Although integral to the community forestry agenda being advocated is the provision of tenurial rights to forest occupants, the College and the University have long denied the residents within the Makiling forest tenurial instruments. It is only when the latter mobilized against the University that the process of devising mechanisms to legitimize tenure was initiated.

Bureaucracies and academic institutions continue to undermine the deepening of the democratization process when it adopts exclusionary language. The bureaucratic language, as manifested for example in statutory constructions, is structured in such a way that it becomes inaccessible to ordinary citizens. It is an irony that empowering laws are crafted in disempowering jargon. Academic discourses, like this paper for example, tend to also be deeply immersed in its own type of exclusionary jargon. (Although I can quickly justify that the target audience of this paper are not local communities, it is still a fact that others may find difficulty in accessing the meaning of what I am saying. Foucault, who brilliantly wrote powerful deconstructions of power and domination,

suffers from the same malaise of writing in highly inaccessible prose). At the global scale, the emergence of global institutions and their attendant epistemic communities of scientists and policy makers have created space for civil society participation. Yet, the language that governs the science, for example of climate change, remains so technical to a point that it inhibits meaningful participation from non-academic civil societies.

For instance, the Protected Area Management Boards (PAMB), established in accordance with the NIPAS Law in the Philippines, has reserved seats for NGOs and Peoples Organizations (or POs). However, the structured discourse of meetings has the tendency to inhibit, if not discourage, active participation from local communities not only due to the language used, but also to the format itself. Communities are used to unstructured discussions, with story telling as the popular vehicle for articulating ideas. I have been to community meetings that lasted for hours due to the relative openness of the discourse and the unstructured nature of the direction of the meeting. This mode of communication is incompatible to the more time-defined, rigid format of formal meetings.

However, the ultimate irony happens when democratization in governance is not completed even in those sectors of civil society that carried the struggle for political participation. In Thailand, for example, it is interesting that the issue of women's rights and gender equality is not addressed in the community forestry movement. In the Philippines, I personally know of student activists and farmer and union leaders who are deeply committed to the protection of the rights of their sectors, but are insensitive, if not outright hostile, to the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. Fortunately, and again through legislated directives and not as an offshoot of organic uprisings of women, the community forestry program in the Philippines has integrated gender concerns in its operations.

However, the hierarchical and patriarchal, and to a large extent elitist structures which prevail in indigenous cultural communities, are not engaged at all in the promotion of their rights to self determination. Calls to integrate gender issues have been dismissed as running against the cultural norms of communities, and are therefore culturally inappropriate. In fact, the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) Law passed in 1997 has privileged indigenous ways. While this may affirm the indigenous cultures, it also affirms together with it the elitist and exclusionary modes of governance within them. Thus, in pushing for democratization along the rights of indigenous communities, advocates ignored democratization along class and gender lines.

Cultural relativism and the fear of Western liberal constructs are issues that confront democratization movements that call for the widening of political participation to include autonomy and self-determination. In Thailand, this tension is more pronounced in the context of the cultural positioning of women in society. Local communities or organic civil societies are embodiments of local modes of constituting power. The irony of democratization movements will be when the discourse is limited to recognition of the rights of communities to participate in forest and natural resource management, but without engaging the exclusionary relations of power as well as the

elitist modes with which it is constituted. The completeness of the democratization process lies in the deepening of political participation not only across social and political groups and organizations but also within them.

The deepening of the democratization process entails a reorientation of the nature of social movements away from focusing only on issues of participation at the level of State governance. This necessitates a need to widen the domain of the political. The struggles of women have long been fought not only in the domain of the State but also in the domain of the household and the personal. This will also involve a critical engagement of the discourse of identities, as it becomes extremely problematic when the rights of women contend with the rights over the integrity of culture. This is a difficult terrain to navigate, particularly when the social movements that carry the democratization agenda thrive on an ideology that is propelled by a cultural logic.

There is a need to inquire into the extent within which cultural symbols are embedded in the ideology that sustains the community forestry movement in Thailand, and whether this ideology constrains the entry of gender and class equality constructs. In the same manner that it is also important to inquire into the actual dynamics of gender and class relations both in Thai and Philippine upland communities, particularly in indigenous communities, to really ascertain how women are actually situated, and how to best confront the issue. The dynamics of “othering” and “subordinating” are always complex questions that are locally manifested. The best persons who can provide powerful inquiries into these issues are the participants in the movements themselves, particularly those who are “othered” and “subordinated.” Women and non-elites in Thai and Philippine forest communities have to begin to look at the question of exclusion no longer at the scale of the State denying the community the right to participate in resource management and in other broader areas of governance. They just have to begin to look into their own modes, and critically engage how order is maintained in their communities and in their homes.

Transforming the Mode of Institutionalization:
Civilizing the State and Containing the
Bureaucratization of Civil Society

As previously discussed, the present modes of forest governance in Thailand and the Philippines are an articulation of outcomes of political transformation which both aimed at establishing order and at strengthening political participation. Policies emerged as a confluence of the dynamics between a State that maintains legal and constitutional authority over a resource, even as forces in civil society have engaged the State in creating spaces for local forest management and participation. Democratization movements have assisted in the process in which the State accommodated civil society. In Thailand, this took the form of a social movement that directly carries the community forestry agenda. In the Philippines, the absence of a national social movement in community forestry is replaced by an incorporation of civil society agenda, through civil society advocacy, in the operations of the forest bureaucracy. However, the widening of

democratization in forest governance did not automatically translate to its deepening within the institutions of the State as well as of civil society. Exclusionary and elitist structures and processes remain embedded in the manner in which social order is maintained.

The problem of exclusion, which is heightened in elitist modes of constitution of power, is a different question when compared to the problem of alienation. Democratization movements have successfully challenged the elitist modes of constitution and have caused a shift from elitism to pluralism. However, as shown by evidence, these movements have the tendency not to engage the problem of alienation, and therefore have failed to problematize how power gains legitimacy in the context of identity positions.

In Thailand and in the Philippines, the movements that caused the withdrawal of authoritarian structures and the re-entry of democratically constructed governments were outcomes of struggles that challenged exclusionary modes of governance. Their political agenda revolved around a discourse of rights that focused on the right to participate in government. However, such discourse initially failed to extend beyond the right to participate in order to address the issue of the right to personhood and autonomy. What the second-generation social movements in both Thailand and the Philippines challenged was the constitution of power, manifested in the State's concentration on the elite, and not the manner power was institutionalized. In other words, the State was challenged in terms of its exclusionary projects, but not in terms of its alienating tendencies.

However, even as the discourse of rights which was carried by the second generation social movements initially fell short of resisting identity repression, the opening of spaces for democratic participation has provided a healthy condition for the acquisition by civil society movements of an identity agenda.

In Thailand, this was immediate, with the ease with which movements assumed such agenda having been influenced by the ideological foundation of the social movements that fought for the opening of democratic space. The counter-ideology that was carried by oppositional movements directly negated the State's appropriation of the Thai identity, and had therefore used the very same logic to invert the dominant State project. Reformist Buddhism was used to launch a deconstruction of the "nation, religion, King" dogma, and the village became a metaphor that was offered to be an antithesis to the corrupt and elitist State. Thus, even as the initial agenda of the democratization movement in Thailand was to open spaces for participation, the struggle did not end there, but had to be carried through into the domain of the political construction of social capital.

The State was challenged not only as a structure of power that favored elite modes of constitution but also as a sphere of legitimation that alienated Thais from their "true Thainess." This discourse was initially submerged in the political mobilization against the Suchinda government in 1992 that the politically pragmatic project then was at the level of structures of government. The opening of the democratic space allowed civil

society actors to veer their advocacy away from the ritual of replacing “governors” and into the realm of problematizing the “legitimacy of governance.” Thus, social movements were transformed in the sense that from being struggles against exclusion, they re-acquired the anti-alienation agenda that was deeply embedded in the ideology of their formation. At the time, the environmental debate was the focus of political discourse, and community forestry became a fertile venue to launch an attack against the statist mode of institutionalization that inhabited State forest policy and governance. The metaphor of the forest village became a powerful symbol that frontally challenged the State.

In the Philippines, social movements that ousted Marcos and led to the opening of the democratic space were mostly carrying a liberal agenda inspired by the secular American model of democracy. Even as the institutions of Catholicism intervened into the discourse of EDSA I, such intervention was not in the mode of an ideological challenge against the nature of the State but as a moral call against corruption and elitism that the Marcosian State espoused. The discourse of separation between Church and State was strongly institutionalized, that even church-based civil society institutions such as the Basic Christian Communities (BCC) failed to capture the imagination of rural peoples to adopt the ideology of liberation theology. Church activism focused on the evils of exclusionary relationships and the moral transformation of governance but did not offer a powerful metaphor that can serve as an alternative to the State. Social movements, which aimed at creating democratic spaces in the Philippines, problematized how the State was being run at the time.

However, this problematization did not extend into an assault of the State as an institution. In fact, some of the discourses, which were deployed to justify the replacement of Marcos, argued that his authoritarianism compromised the integrity of the State and of democratic institutions. The agenda, therefore, was not to overhaul the State and its attendant modes of institutionalization, but only to replace the personalities inhabiting it. The State was still seen, in the liberal democratic tradition, as the protector of freedom and citizen’s rights. This is largely explained by the fact that the anti-Marcos movement was dominated by the elite and the middle class, most of which adhered to this liberal democratic image of the State. The left, which offered a different perspective of the State, was “left” out when it decided not to participate in EDSA I. Thus, when Marcos fell, and the democratic space was re-opened, the immediate project was to reform the State, and not to transform it. A powerful symbol, like the “village” in the case of Thailand, was absent to offer as a rallying point to launch a deconstructive assault against the State’s monopoly of legitimacy as the purveyor of social order.

The discourse of reforming the State became easier to achieve in the Philippines since the bureaucracies were not independent from classes, but were merely reflections of class interests. The opening of the democratic space has allowed civil society agents to invade the bureaucracy, which historically is a permeable domain for political appointments. In the period following the ouster of Marcos, the “political” nature of these appointments enabled the extension of the politicization of civil societies into the bureaucratic sphere, in that civil society activists were appointed to key sensitive policy

making posts. Hence, the deepening of the social movement that started in the streets and in civil society partly occurred in the domain of the bureaucracy and the State. In the environment and forestry sectors, policy reforms ensued, clearly reflecting the civil society's demands for participatory governance and transparency. Community forestry, which at the time was already a State discourse by virtue of Marcos' acquisition of it in his legitimation project earlier, was further deepened as a policy agenda. Thus, in the Philippines, community forestry is already a policy, even as in Thailand it is still an object of policy debate.

The key issue now that has to be addressed is the way the mode of institutionalization, or the construction of social capital, has been transformed. Liberation movements and not just democratization movements drive the transition from pluralist-statist to pluralist-civil society modes of governance. The issue that is confronted is not simply the problem of exclusion but also the problem of alienation. As evidence suggests, democratization processes may be successful in restructuring the distribution of power in society, but it may fall short in affecting a transformation in how power is institutionalized.

In the domain of forest governance, it is clear that the community forestry movement in Thailand is now poised to challenge the manner in which power is institutionalized in the domain of human-forest relationship. Statist bureaucratic modes that the RFD has long adopted are now confronted by a community forestry alternative that is deeply rooted in the community village ethic, which privileges organic civil society institutions over bureaucratic mechanisms. In the Philippines, the absence of a grassroots movement in community forestry is an outcome of the fact that civil society movements have effectively influenced the development of forest policy. In the discourse of community forestry in the Philippines, local civil society institutions are allowed to provide the necessary mechanism for forest governance and the establishment of institutions concerned with collective decisions making, representation and gender equality are encouraged. The democratic space opened by community forestry has also enabled indigenous identities to participate in forest governance in spite of the fact that they are male-dominated and that some of them still have hierarchical tendencies, characteristics that obviously prevent the deepening of participatory governance. Nevertheless, one is still tempted to say that there is now a creeping "civilization" of the State in the Philippines.

The risk in making this conclusion lies in the fact that symbolic entry of civil society metaphors in forest governance, particularly when aided by top-level policy sponsorship, may on the surface project an opening for civil society modes of institutionalizing human-forest interactions. However, evidence suggests that the reverse is what is actually happening. Indigenous modes of social capital, which rest on reciprocity and mutual assistance as well as on traditional rituals of exchange, are gradually eroded with the entry of bureaucratically constructed participatory initiatives. As pointed out in the preceding section, the participation of civil society institutions or their exposure to statist modes of constructing social capital ironically tends to bureaucratize these institutions. This is true both in the case of local communities and of

intermediary institutions organizationally represented by NGOs. This is a risk that has already materialized into the actual bureaucratization of the everyday life of civil society institutions in the Philippines, a risk, which may eventually beset Thai civil societies when the State finally decides to put a bureaucratic imprint on community forestry. In fact, as it is lamented that the present State's version of the community forestry law is limited to participatory rights of communities, and does not seriously give attention to the needs of the indigenous hill-tribes and their rights for self-determination (Ganjanapan, 2000).

However, it is not defensible to argue that the entry of bureaucratically constructed participatory processes is the only cause for the bureaucratization of civil societies. In fact, the transformation of everyday village life is affected by the larger interplay between the local, national and global in the context of modernization and globalization. Social change and alteration in modes of production occur as an interaction between social and physical forces, as levels of resources both constrain and are sites for the manifestation of the impact of changes in social relations. Communities, whether rural or urban, continue to experience transformation in their modes of constitution and institutionalization.

At this point, it is also not totally correct to lament the loss of organic modes of constructing social capital, for it could even mean the liberation of women and other non-elites from oppressive structures which deny them their rights to their "personhood." However, it must be clearly emphasized that bureaucratization of everyday life, while indeed may carry liberating impacts; have to be mediated by an organic consciousness that is aware of the liberation metaphor. The recruitment of external participatory constructs, and their advocacy by bureaucratic agents, seen for example in the advocacy for gender equality carried by State-sponsored community forest organizers in the Philippines, should unfold with the active participation of women and the non-elites themselves.

Furthermore, struggles for recognition in the context of the politics of identity must not be seen in isolation from democratization processes. As discussed in the preceding section, the struggle of indigenous communities and the local villages for autonomy and recognition should be in the context of deepening the democratization process in order to extend into its own modes of governance. It will also require a conscious effort to constructively mediate the external and internal idioms of rights and rituals. Ganjanapan (2000) provides a succinct argument on this point in his analysis of community forestry in Thailand:

Although the practices of community forestry in northern Thailand may have some basis on local values and customs, it can not simply be regarded as a reflection of an idealistic sense of community because it is, in most cases, a creation of a new culture as a dynamic response to changing situations. Particularly, in encountering with changes in property relations, community forestry can be seen both as a reproduction of local idioms and a construction of a new discourse with an adoption of a universal concept of rights which allow local communities to articulate their claims to collective rights in resources. However, the reconstruction of collective rights as an anti-hegemonic ideology can be

fully realized by local people not only through social struggles but also with a reinforcement of local idioms which is possible with cultural processes of ritual (219).

Finally, it is important to point out that civil societies also exist within bureaucratic institutions. I am adamant in insisting that the definition of civil society should be weaned from its organizational anchor, and should instead be driven by an institutional logic. Civil society institutions become such not because of their organizational location, but in the manner in which they unfold within a social formation. Bureaucracies are in themselves communities, albeit dominated by statist modes of institutionalization wherein written documents, formal structures and impersonal relationships take precedence over the personal and “informal.”

A close institutional analysis of bureaucratic organizations, such as RFD and DENR, would reveal the presence of informal groups and associations, of networks of trust and reciprocity that, although invisible, tend to influence organizational behavior and consequently public policy. For example, the closed association of Thai foresters in RFD is a form of civil association that directly impinges upon the manner the organization confronts policy issues. It is not denied that the presence of informal cliques can degenerate into disabling structures, such as bureaucratic “mafias” and patronage politics. However, on the positive side, these informal associations have the power to negate bureaucratic rigidity.

The presence of civil society modes of institutionalizing power within State bureaucracies, albeit still in the margins at present, can provide a possible venue for the deepening of the transformative project of liberating society from the alienating discourses of bureaucratic institutions. These informal associations often provide creative venues, while on lunch-break or while on a field inspection tour, for debate and discussions. They have the potential to become powerful conduits for the articulation of an oppositional voice. It is important to give as an example the fact that in my long experience interacting with foresters and local communities in the Philippines, I have observed that the foresters who are working in the community forestry divisions appear to be the most vocal in their discomfort of bureaucratic discourses. They are also mostly young and idealistic and perhaps, not surprisingly, mostly women. To local communities, they are very popular and well liked. In this regard, their voices provide a venue for the deepening of civil society within the bureaucracy and, at the same time, their faces provide a symbol for humanizing bureaucracies in the eyes of local communities.

In this sense, civil societies within bureaucratic organizations may just be the key to the transformation of the State and its modes of governance.

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