

PANEL 5

The Role of Social Movements in the Quest for Viable Alternatives



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The failure of the predominant political, economic, and social system to deliver the promise of equitable distribution of wealth and power necessitates the search for alternatives to existing perspectives and praxis. Social movements across time and space have continued to contend that “another world is possible,” especially with the pronouncement of adherents of the neoliberal school of thought that “There Is No Alternative” (TINA). The challenge, however, lies not only in the creativity but also in the viability and sustainability of proposed alternatives.

As the walls of the Soviet experiment crumbled in the latter part of the 1980s, so has the quest for viable alternatives become more imperative. This was coupled with the increasing skepticism about the prevailing development paradigm (Feffer 2002), as the divide between the developed and developing countries became more emphasized. With the Washington consensus recommendations to liberalize both developed and developing economies gaining ground, structural adjustments were “proposed” as catch-up mechanisms for nations whose trade, industry, and financial systems are deemed “less healthy” (Feffer 2002). The encroachment of

supranational institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in directing national economies, particularly of the developing world, coupled with the emergence of the "new global aristocracy" (de Rivero 2001) of transnational corporations, further emphasized the search for alternative paradigms.

Alternatives, according to Martin Khor (2003), are tackled either at the level of policy or process. They can take place either in the regional arena, in the halls of policy making at the national level, or in rural communities interspersed across the Third World. More important, people take the center stage given the nebulous and faceless market in this alternate reality.

This discussion paper presents the several proposals put forward by Philippine social movements on debt relief, changing international trade rules, fair trade, and the Tobin tax, drawn from the larger research project on global civil-society movements supported by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). In so doing, an attempt will be made to view these alternatives from the perspectives of the state, supranational institutions, and the public. The manner by which these movements pursue individual but interrelated strategies will also be examined.

CONTEXTS OF THE EMERGING ALTERNATIVES

The burgeoning external debt that the administration of Ferdinand Marcos bequeathed in the aftermath of its downfall has sparked public interest, especially in light of the transactions involved in the acquisition and disbursement of loans and the masses bearing the brunt of scrimping resources to pay it off. Adding insult to injury, then-President Corazon Aquino committed to honor all Philippine debts. Thus, this issue became a rallying point for the formation of the Freedom from Debt Coalition as the broadest issue-based coalition of civil-society organizations that carried the call for accountability on the part of the international credit institutions.

The Philippines' accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), on the other hand, provided the milieu for the mobilization of civil-society organizations on trade issues. In the case study on the Stop the New Round coalition (SNR), the Cancun ministerial meeting was a critical juncture for civil-society organizations to campaign for the derailment of trade talks, which could lead either to reforming the governance structure of the trade regime or its eventual abolition. This was further bolstered by qualms expressed by government on whether the result of the Cancun negotiations would deliver the promised benefits of membership in the trade regime.

While macroeconomic policies of government were contested by one segment of civil society, accessing international markets for products and crafts of producer groups and community-based artisans was pursued via alternate trading circuits in response to widespread poverty in rural areas. These initiatives at the local level were undertaken by players in the fair trade movement.

For proponents of the Tobin tax, the backlash of liberalizing the financial market with the Asian crisis in 1997, on the other hand, prompted the revival of a proposal to manage capital flows. The Tobin tax was originally put forward by James Tobin to regulate the unhampered foreign exchange trading. Concrete

Table1. Matrix of alternatives based on Feffer’s characterization of alternatives to globalization

Movement	Alternative/s	Level	Facet
Changing international trade rules	Junk WTO	Macro	Economic and political
	Reform the WTO		
	Derail the new round of talks		
Debt relief	Alternative debt and development strategy	Macro	Economic and political
Fair trade	Alternative business model; alternative trading channels/circuits; alternative trading system	Micro to macro	Social, economic, and cultural
Tobin tax	Capital flow management structures and systems	Macro	Economic

actions undertaken by groups that showed initial interest in the proposal were devoted to conducting researches and dialogues with like-minded organizations in the Asian region.

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

A survey of the campaigns of the different movements reveals that all of these initiatives are directed toward debunking what TINA advocates would want us to believe—that there are alternatives to the existing social, economic, and political milieus. John Feffer (2002) characterizes alternative responses to globalization processes to be viable and multifaceted (covers social, economic, political, and/or cultural spheres). They can be undertaken and directed toward various levels (macro, meso, or micro). They can be issue-specific or systemic (Feffer 2002).

In the case of FDC, developing an alternative strategy in dealing with the issue of debt is at the center of its campaigns. The issue of debt has unleashed a web of concerns, from debt servicing to the delivery of social services, which are manifestations of the kowtowing of the government to the prescriptions of multilateral institutions as reflected in its macroeconomic policies. As an alternative to this, FDC has continually sought to reform the government’s debt policy that entails repealing existing debt-related policies and legislations, and crafting a legislative agenda. The coalition espoused the view that debt, as an option of government to finance development objectives, should be availed of and expended judiciously.

Because of its time-bound nature, SNR’s proposal sought to capture two opposing alternatives of its broad constituency: dismantle the WTO, and reform the governance structures of the trade body—in explicit terms, derail the negotiations during the Cancun ministerial.

Establishing alternative trading channels and showing that a triple bottom-line¹ model in business is possible are among the concrete and community-based proposals of the fair trade movement. Starting out to provide foreign markets that

¹ In the social entrepreneurship literature, double or triple bottom lines pertain to an enterprise objective that goes beyond amassing profit. Social enterprises, or practitioners of social entrepreneurship, have multilevel objectives that include social development as well as environmental or cultural preservation goals (Dacanay 2004).

are otherwise elusive for small farmers and craftworkers, the vision of the movement as articulated by its advocates and practitioners has expanded to include challenging the corporate-driven trade under the WTO.

The case of the Tobin tax initiative presents a response to the unhindered flow of capital and portfolio investments under a liberalized financial market. The proposal remains to be unpopular among civil-society organizations in the Philippines, as it does not figure prominently in the more bread-and-butter issues that they tackle. The complexity of the issue also hinders it from being included in the policy agenda of organizations.

MOVING IT FORWARD

In pursuing its agenda, FDC conducted policy research and analysis as a means to further strengthen its knowledge on the issue of debt, especially in light of the government's refusal to disclose details about the Philippine debt. Popular education was pursued not only to diffuse this information but also to build a broader constituency. Warm bodies were also necessary in the coalition's mass mobilizations, the most concrete demonstration that the issue is gaining foothold on the ground. Intervention through the judiciary to repeal the Automatic Appropriations Act and to hinder the securitization deal was also attempted. This, however, proved to be an unsuccessful venture. The legislature provided a more promising arena for the alternative debt policy to move forward.

In the course of SNR's campaign, it pursued strategies similar to FDC. But SNR extended its reach further by incessantly engaging the state, specifically the executive and the legislative branches of government. Furthermore, SNR used mainstream media as a venue to popularize an otherwise technical issue such as international trade via infomercials. Its international work was limited to information exchange with other organizations involved in the trade campaign, specifically during the Cancun ministerial.

Strategies to address issues and concerns raised by the fair trade movement include raising consumer awareness to influence buying attitudes and behavior; directly engaging mainstream businesses; enhancing producer capacities to meet market demands, as well as align with international fair trade principles and practices; and engaging in policy advocacy. It is interesting to note that these courses of action are pursued by individual fair trade organizations, but are yet to be consolidated as a cohesive strategy of the Philippine fair trade movement.

RESPONSES: STATE, INSTITUTIONS, AND THE PUBLIC

In engaging the state, FDC, SNR, and the fair trade movement have had varied experiences in terms of responses to their demands. Both SNR and FDC have penetrated the halls of the legislature through independent-minded lawmakers. Finding allies in this branch of government had paved the way for policy proposals to be crafted into bills and inserted into the legislative agenda. The experience of SNR in drawing out responses from the executive yielded different results: some technocrats were impervious to persuasion, particularly regarding positions and strategies of government in trade negotiation as in the case of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA); others were more open to establishing constructive relationships with formations such as SNR, as in the case of the Department of Agriculture's Assistant

Secretary Segfredo Serrano. In the case of the Tobin tax proposal, attempts of the Action for Economic Reforms, for instance, to engage government institutions on the proposal did not generate much attention, much less support from the technocrats and other policymakers.

The DTI, specifically the regional offices, has a more positive relationship with actors from the fair trade movement. Relationships are collaborative in nature, with the DTI extending assistance to fair trade practitioners, particularly on identifying beneficiaries and carrying programs and projects for small and medium enterprises at the local level.

Public responses to alternatives posed by these movements have likewise been varied. In the cases of FDC and SNR, awareness of the debt problem and trade issues resulted from popular education and media advocacy campaigns. However, it is not clear whether this became a rallying point for unaligned individuals to participate in the movement as this was not covered in the discussion in the case study. It is also difficult for the fair trade movement to generate public response as the movement has yet to popularize the concept of fair trade.

At the level of supranational institutions, FDC was given the opportunity to take part in UN meetings and conferences in which a discussion on debt is part of the agenda. The case study on FDC also indicates that the coalition captured the fleeting interest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the latter seeking a dialogue that, unfortunately, did not push through.

The case of the Tobin tax initiative is interesting in the sense that the proposal has been floated among prospective movement players, but it failed to generate enough support for it to become a full-blown campaign in the Philippines. Interest in the Tobin tax is limited to academics (specifically those from the University of the Philippines School of Economics) and a handful of organizations such as the Action for Economic Reforms, the Focus on the Global South-Philippines Programme, the Freedom from Debt Coalition, and the Alliance of Progressive Labor.

CONCLUSION

A cursory look at alternatives proposed by social movements belies the claim that the road to development is only through the path paved by the supremacy of the market. As shown by the case studies, alternatives pursued by social movements are both critiques to policies as well as dominant social, political, and economic processes.

Undertaken in various fronts—at the international (via international organizations), regional, national, and local levels—these alternatives resonate the yearnings of their respective constituencies. This lends movements' proposals the legitimacy that they need to rally support for these alternatives. SNR, FDC, and the fair trade movement make use of several repertoires in pushing for their agendas. In the process, allies are gained from the ranks of government, other civil-society organizations, and even the general public. Insofar as the viability of alternatives is concerned, local initiatives such as those undertaken by participants in the fair trade movement, though promising in their contribution to the local economy, still need to prove their long-term sustainability. Alternatives posed by SNR and FDC, on the other hand, face the challenge of being dismissed as rhetoric and uncertain.

Directing campaigns to appropriate bodies such as governments or supranational institutions is also an important element in pushing forward social movements' proposals. The Tobin tax initiative, for instance, which currently confronts resistance from players in the financial sector, should be directed to governments as the final decision maker in terms of regulating capital inflows and outflows. As Ha-Joon Hang (2003) succinctly puts it, "It is policy, or politics, that determines exactly where the boundary [of globalization] lies" (in Madeley 2003). Targeting consumers as well as macroeconomic policymakers, in the case of the fair trade movement, can further push the fair trade agenda forward from the communities to centers of power.

The immanent lesson that can be gleaned from the case studies is that social movements continue to be rich sources of alternatives. But an alternative will remain just that—an "alternative"—if enough support is not generated and mobilized. Even in this age when the market supposedly rules, government continues to be a center of power where engagement is critical. The source of power is located where these alternatives matter most—in the communities.

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Reactions

MARIO AGUJA (PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE, AKBAYAN! CITIZENS' ACTION PARTY):

The concept of social movements or *kilusang masa* is always evolving. The tradition in the 1960s and 1970s is different from what we have now. It is, therefore, important to examine what we really mean by "social movements" in the current context.

In the search for viable alternatives I would like to raise the question: What do we mean by "viable"? Do we see social movements in the same position as that of the state? Social movements



do not behave like the government or hold similar power. Such expectation—of likening movements with the state—needs to be reconsidered. Social movements are definitely different from political parties. Political parties offer comprehensive proposals and alternatives that have economic and political implications. On the other hand, mass movements—at least the groups included in the study—only focus on the issues. This can pose a limitation because issues are embedded in the policy framework. Although the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) specializes on debt, for instance, the question of debt cannot be divorced from the overall fiscal policy of government. Sometimes movements take only aspects of the issue and not in its entirety. The Stop the New Round (SNR) engages in issues on the international trade regime, but there is also the incursion of the global into the local on which the coalition does not focus much. Thus, SNR is not really keen on the domestic issue of consumer rights.

Movements also have limitations in terms of resources and technical expertise, upon which depends the drafting of viable alternatives, especially in this country where access to information is a major problem. How can movements make concrete alternatives without much access to information? The mass movement's alternative is as good as the information it could access. If you look at FDC, you will see that there are areas where the movement is active because it has access to new information. FDC is active on the debt issue because in the government's annual budget a significant proportion is allocated for debt servicing. Access to new information helps to keep FDC consistent in its cause.

My next point has to do with the ability of mass movements to engage in current political developments. In the past, the government was not the direct enemy of mass movements, but based on the presentation the enemy now is the government and the supranational institutions. This reality is linked to the question of power, particularly the power of social movements to engage the state. Engagement of other sectors in society offers a rich source of alternatives, but that depends on how mass movements engage the state in the form of power relations. That is why some people from the movement join political parties to push for a political agenda based on alternatives proposed by the movement. Other groups lobby in the heart of policymaking—Congress—because they want to effect change in policy. Without dealings on these levels, alternatives will remain alternatives. Whether these alternatives are doable, or can be incorporated in public policy discourse, at least, remains a question. Many groups directly engage in the policy debate with people in government. The only problem with public policy debates is the lack of information. The government, as I pointed out earlier, does not provide adequate information.

Most of the time, civil-society groups are cognizant of the fact that they are there to provide a critique of existing conditions, to link that to the daily lives of the people. But how proposed alternatives sink in public consciousness depends on how they are effectively communicated. The World Trade Organization-led trade liberalization is a huge international issue, but how many average Filipinos know about it? Social movements need to bring the issue down to the level of the individual peasant. It is quite a broad stroke to relate that broader issue to specific conditions in the daily lives of ordinary people. The Tobin tax issue is really difficult to popularize. Many Filipinos do not even pay taxes, so how are they supposed to

discuss Tobin tax? The issue is something not a lot of ordinary Filipinos can relate to. It is difficult to bring the issue down to ordinary citizens and relate it to their everyday lives.

Existing policies are dependent on the power of the mass movement. What are the sources of this power? Knowledge and information; people (definitely a very important component for mass movements); and finally, the policy discourse, particularly the engagement with formal channels of policy work. I would like to elaborate further on the third source of power. No matter how impressive the proposal is, no matter how dutiful the members are in going to rallies, if the mass movement is not visible in the media—in effect not taking part in the policy discourse—then these alternatives will not be effective. So the question that social movements in the Philippines have to reckon with is, how do you make yourself relevant in the area of policy discourse?

One option, which many groups are actually doing now, is to engage Congress. However, many civil-society groups entrenched in tradition still do not engage government. SNR, for example, has problems in terms of advocacy work mainly because the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) does not want to dialogue with them. DTI, as we know, is the lead agency in the WTO negotiations. Given the futility of dialogue, SNR has no recourse but to take the issue to the streets, which I would say is a long shot if significant change in policy is the target. FDC is successful on that aspect to some extent, but the main aim of policy engagement has not yet come to fruition. Year after year, FDC calls for the repeal of Presidential Decree 1177, or the Automatic Appropriation Law, but pro-administration legislators continue to approve the national budget that does little to improve the welfare of the country—or not at all. The root of the issue is the nontransparency of the auditing process. Government is not telling us the actual amount of debt we have now. Unless we audit the country's payments, it will be hard to plot specific alternatives to curb the debt crisis. Again, limited information necessarily limits the crafting of alternatives. This problem is the biggest challenge for mass movements.

Despite the abovementioned limitations, our causes are worth every form of struggle. The more we continue with our advocacies, sharpen our alternatives, and engage in power relations, the better our chances of being heard. If government will only open the venue for discourse and provide further information, then we will be able to sharpen our policy alternatives, and thereby move closer to alleviating the oppressive structures in society.

My recommendation for this paper is to look at how mass movements are faring in this country. In addition, the paper can also look more thoroughly into the linkages within national movements. For instance, the paper can study FDC as a national organization with regional networks. More specifically, it can examine how the different networks or chapters contribute to the overall policy advocacy. The study can do the same for SNR, although I would assume that the network is more complex.

ISAGANI SERRANO (SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PHILIPPINE RURAL RECONSTRUCTION MOVEMENT):

I would like to begin my comments by saying that the issues addressed by the movements that were studied hit the jugular. As far as I am concerned, these issues are, in general, questions of justice, equality, and fairness between and within nations. Tobin tax is a rather heavy subject because it deals with runaway capitalism, speculations, and hot money. Professionals in business and finance would possibly be able to understand the issues dealing with the global financial system and how it trickles down to the local level, of which the Tobin Tax is part. In any case, the Tobin tax issue is worth popularizing.

In my view, the issue of fairness is at the center of all movement advocacies. Movements, by and large, seek to bring fairness and equity in society. I think the movements for debt relief and fair trade, respectively, carry pressing issues that essentially deal with fairness. Take the case of the movement on debt relief. The movement through FDC has various proposals. The current proposal on the national debt audit is being deliberated in Congress. There is also the Jubilee Campaign, which calls for the financial accountability of international financing institutions.

The proposed alternatives truly resonate concerns of the stakeholders that the four movements represent. However, I am not sure if the stakeholders fully understand these proposals and alternatives. I know Tobin tax is mostly circulating in the e-mail. It is a movement mainly waged on the Internet. Those who were drawn to the issue are people interested in speculative activities of money players. Whether the stakeholders are receptive or not is a function of the presence of independent-minded lawmakers, those whom we call stalwarts or champions of change. The alternatives each movement proposes suggest a resolution *within* the state system of the suprastate system or the international institution. Therefore, these alternatives are not altogether creating an alternative world. From the proposed alternatives of the movements, which the paper covered, I do not see any indication that they want to create a separate, parallel world. The alternatives actually belong in the policy arena. This implies that issues do not need an alternative system because these can be resolved within the current state system.

An exception, though, is the case of the fair trade movement. The main proposal is a people-to-people trade arrangement. I remember in the 1980s, coffee and sugar were traded using this kind of scheme by some Third World countries. In terms of growth, the emergence of the food movement is strong, especially in reaction to agriculture "scares" like genetically modified organisms and biotechnology.

As a final point, I have observed that there is nothing new or unique about the actions and strategies that were examined. They sounded like standard operating procedures (SOPs). But this does not necessarily mean they are out of fashion or



ineffective. I believe movements can progress with or without the state system. In the case of debt relief, unless there is a successful revolution, all debts can be simply written off. The alternatives posed by the movement for debt relief can only happen within existing states. What remains in question is exactly how movements are able to make an impact on decisions currently being taken.

Creating a significant impact on policy is a collective effort. There are other movements in the Philippines addressing the debt issue and they are not necessarily members of FDC. These advocacies within the country resonate worldwide, but how to exactly trace the global movements' inputs to their intended outcomes is not explicit in the paper. More specifically, the paper did not explain how the agreements that emerged from the last Group of Eight (G8) meeting in terms of the global issue of debt relief influence the movement's actions at the national and local levels. Let us look at the collective action in Africa. Africa is raising hell on the debt issue. This kind of call led to a change of heart of some of the world's superpowers to expend the debt relief. Other countries such as China are also putting pressure on the G8 to begin enacting mechanisms for debt relief. What is happening in the global stage should be considered in studying the actions and strategies of the debt-relief movement, and in particular the FDC. I think SNR is quite strong on using the media in presenting its alternatives. The strategy of using the media makes the issue accessible. I could not understand the technical jargon of the WTO. By engaging the media, SNR gives the issue a high profile and gives it a wider public reach. The strategy also makes mobilization easier.

In my view, alternatives can only be realized with the participation of the state. If you are looking for "alternative governance," for example, you will inevitably engage the state. The electoral battle in Palestine is not just about voting, going to precincts, and making Hamas win. Some other power is assumed in that situation. If the social movements that were studied worked within this kind of political state dynamics, I doubt that the alternatives they propose can be actualized. There should be regime change to make those happen, or at least a change of heart in the two governments—but that is wishful thinking.



FILOMENO STA. ANA III

(COORDINATOR, ACTION FOR ECONOMIC REFORMS):

The paper attempts to weave together assorted issues and movements that have so many complexities. In that context, I would like to put forward some proposals that can help improve the paper. It is understandable that the essay is some kind of a summary but it will be good to specify reforms that each movement has been advocating, particularly what constitutes

the reform agenda and its specifications. From there we can proceed to evaluating—to use the author's term—how viable or sustainable these alternatives are.

It is one issue to determine what these alternatives are but I think it is more important to determine whether such alternatives are rigorous; whether such alternatives are realistic and viable. To give an example, one group belonging to the SNR coalition calls for the abolition of the WTO. It is good propaganda, but the question is, is destroying one institution an alternative? Whether we like it or not, we need some institution to govern international trade.

My third comment is that the paper is quite descriptive of the campaigns, strategies, and tactics of the movements. The outcomes are also explicit, but I would like to delve into the factors that explain the different outcomes. As Isagani Serrano said, the strategies are more or less the same; they are somewhat SOPs. What would explain the success of FDC in relation to international advocacy? How come SNR was able to get information that enabled the campaign to take off? What would explain these outcomes, given that components of the strategies are "standard"? There should be some variables, perhaps from the political condition, or the balance of forces.

I will now go into some probing issues. Hopefully, these issues can stimulate debate about the frame of the movements. It seems that the frame used in analyzing the movements revolves around, among other things, the debate between the state and the market. There is a section in the paper saying that the dominant paradigm is the market having supremacy over the state. The globalization debate has always been framed in that manner. Even though the argument that the dogmatic type of liberalization demeans the state is valid, this still does not fully explain the debate in relation to the issue of distribution. The likes of United States President George Bush and even President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA), for example, would use state instruments to attain some political objectives. The bigger question now is: How do gains or reforms result in equitable distribution that would benefit the majority? As it is, state intervention benefits only the few, especially the elite. Raising tariffs would not necessarily result in greater benefits or greater gains for the farmers or for the workers. We should not look at these debates only in terms of a state-versus-market dichotomy. It is also necessary to look at the political-economy question. The issue of distribution is a key concern of movements. We have to grapple with this in relation to questions of sustainability and viability. Distribution has always been associated with populist policies, which can either be bad or good. Again, that depends on the objective of distribution. But from the perspective of sustainability and viability, populism is not enough. Populism can be defined as pursuing policies that are mainly distributive, without enhancing or increasing productive capacity. For the long term, however, there must be an increase in production—we cannot just keep redistributing. It will be interesting to see the proposals of movements that are very suspicious of markets on how distribution can be supplemented with other reform measures focused on increasing productivity and efficiency. Populism could only be sustained if movements would also suggest the question of productivity.

The next point is about the relationship of movements and political parties. I would like to reiterate what Representative Mario Aguja said earlier and perhaps give it a different angle. There is a phenomenon in Latin America in which political

parties are being abandoned. In fact, those winning in elections, those actually in political power, win not through political machines or political parties but mainly through charisma or through movements. There should be no contradiction in having political parties and movements. Movements can exist independently of political parties. It happens in a situation in which people distrust political parties. That is a scenario here in the Philippines. It is good that we have political party representatives in the party-list system but we also have to admit that, overall, political parties like Akbayan are still weak in relation to mainstream political parties. How can we blend political parties and movements? How can one relate with the other? I think one factor that contributes to the separation of movements from political parties is the fragmentation of parties. The Left cannot win through peaceful means—that is, through election—if it is fragmented. Akbayan, by itself, cannot win a national election, but it can unite with political parties.

I have observed that the movements that were studied are single-issue movements. Perhaps we also need to look into more comprehensive movements—more important, a political movement. Fair trade, international trade (SNR), debt (FDC), and Tobin tax movements mainly target external rules and institutions. If we frame the question this way, and we want long-term prosperity and sustainable growth in the Philippines, what then are the main obstacles to Philippine development? External trade rules? The WTO?

Let us look at the situation of the farmers. The farmers are facing the problem of high financial cost for their products. Does that have something to do with the international banking system? Maybe it does. Bad infrastructure affects the income of farmers. The problem with bad infrastructure has something to do with government financing. The lack of revenues is linked to the World Bank. This brings me to the question: What are the binding constraints? Or to use the language of the Left, what is the principal contradiction? It seems to me it is not the WTO, the IMF, or the World Bank. It is so easy to say that the problem is market failure or government failure. But even market failures result from government failures in the Philippine context. As for bad infrastructure, that can be traced to funding for infrastructure, which is linked to the fiscal problem—lack of revenues, tax evasion, etc.—which in turn leads to the question of how policies are being enforced. It all boils down to government.

What we need now is a more explicit political movement without abandoning this single-issue movement. The political movement should also address the problems of governance, expressed right now in the *mal*-governance of GMA. This is basically a political question. It is going to be a journey of self-discovery in order for us to identify which of the key reforms are necessary for long-term growth and prosperity.

Open Forum

ROMEO ROYANDOYAN (CENTRO SAKA INC.):

Does the paper have empirical data to show that fair trade is possible in a neoliberal socioeconomic setting? Has the alternative business model that the movement proposes been examined vis-à-vis other alternatives to fair trade?

ZURAIDA MAE CABILO:

The bias of the fair trade movement for small farmer-producers originates from the marginalization of these small farmer-producers in the market, for which the middleman in the trading process was blamed. These trading go-betweens tend to mark up the prices of products that they sell in the market and gain more profit than their farmer-clients. The small farmers, in effect, tend to lose a lot with the intervention of the middlemen.

The fair trade movement thus advocated intervention through alternative trading organizations in the trading process. Later, the movement took initiatives to facilitate access of small farmers to the market, beginning from the North and working their way down to the South. The strategy was to facilitate trade partnerships among producers and consumers. In addition, the movement also aimed to critique the larger context of trade, particularly the WTO hegemony.

ROMEO ROYANDOYAN:

My concern is simply to know whether empirical data on the movement proposals exist. I am an agricultural producer myself and the issue for me is not about creating alternatives but survival and the defense of my land, which is the source of my livelihood. Small agricultural farmers are concerned with the larger issue of importation, for example. Importation of chicken-leg quarters from the US poses a major threat to backyard poultry raisers. Another issue would be the market competition on garlic. China is a clear threat: imported garlic from China has severely hurt local garlic producers since its intrusion in the local market.

I would like to know if there are alternatives created by the movement in the context of the concrete issues I mentioned. The issue on rights is an entirely different matter. I do not know where the alternative business model should fit in the discourse of fair trade. My suggestion is to study the discourse more thoroughly, particularly the immediate issues that the small producers are facing. In addition, the study should also take into consideration the concrete contexts of these issues. Certainly, the trade conditions today are different twenty years ago.



JOSEPHINE DIONISIO:

I would like to briefly redirect the question on empirical evidence. Let me remind the body that the research project is about social movements. The data source or the empirical data are the alternatives presented by civil-society groups that were studied. The challenge to come up with a more empirically based alternative model is probably a challenge for the social-movement organization. As far as this study is concerned, we are looking at what the social movements are putting forward as alternatives. That is the only “empirical evidence” we can provide.

**ALEX HERMOSO (PHILIPPINE FAIR TRADE FORUM):**

Perhaps we do not fully understand the discourse on fair trade. We seem to overlook the fact that we are ready to engage with the local market. Most of the fair trade organizations are export-oriented. The Philippine Fair Trade Forum, for example, has exported almost USD 3 million worth of food products and handicraft items. That amount is generated by just one network. We have products coming from the fair trade movement produced by small producers from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. To me, that is the most viable alternative because it is very close to the grassroots. We farm producers are putting

food on the table of every Filipino home.

The movement’s slogan this year is “Go Philippines, Go for Fair Trade” to signify that we are now ready to engage with the local market. Now, we are looking for our alternative marketing venues for all our products—organic eggs, organic processed meat, juices, dried mangoes, *guyabano* (soursop), *tinapa* (smoked fish). Muscovado sugar from Antique is being exported to four continents worldwide. However, these products are not locally marketed. That is why we are looking for alternatives to support fair trade products in our country.

Other countries that are keen on the fair trade issue put up “fair trade cities.” We should adopt that kind of initiative here in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the movement continues to come up with ideas. We are thinking of engaging universities such as the University of the Philippines and the Ateneo de Manila University.

TINA PIMENTEL (PROCUREMENT WATCH PHILIPPINES):

I have three major comments. Except for this paper on social movements and alternative realities, I have observed that all the other papers dealt with all movements—on debt relief, changing international policies, taxation, and anti-corruption. The paper, however, did not deal with the anti-corruption movement. I was wondering if the movement was intentionally excluded from the paper.

Second, the paper did not fully answer the question: do these articulate the interests of the stakeholders that social movements claim to represent? If you are

looking at the citizen as the target of all these alternatives proposed and wish to find out if their interests are truly articulated, you can do that through surveys and focus group discussions. Of course, all movements will claim that they represent the interests of the public.

As mentioned by Representative Aguja a while ago, it is important that social movements engage the government if policy proposals are to be institutionalized. Alternatives remain alternatives if they are not institutionalized or adopted by the state. As a nonprofit organization, Procurement Watch turned its procurement advocacy into law. How did we do this? First, we undertook an in-depth research before engaging the executive and local branches of government.

We had to gain credibility on the matter first. We tried to look for potential allies in the executive and legislative branches of the government. We knew that we could not push our alternatives forward or have them implemented if we did not engage the state.

Third, to have a win-win situation we aligned the beliefs and issues of our organization with the personal goals of the people we work with in the government. This strategy benefited the organization, the organization's goals and causes, and most important, the stakeholders. I should also stress that the collaboration with government should be based on a specific reform agenda, not based on similar beliefs or personal ties. The collaboration should be based on defined objectives.

In the case of the Procurement Watch, we offered technical, secretariat and advocacy support to legislators who share our cause. We tried to determine whether their goals are the same with ours, and whether they were influential enough—capable of carrying our advocacy at the level of policy making and influencing people. The capacity of legislators to influence people is an important factor in any advocacy. If we examine the dynamics in Congress, we would see that even if the organization has twenty supporters, if they are not influential enough then it would be difficult to get a law passed.

My third question is: Are there other interest groups advocating *against* the alternatives presented by the groups you studied? You may have noticed that FDC, SNR, Tobin tax, and fair trade have presented alternatives, but these have not yet been adopted as public policy. In my view, one factor that may influence the success of advocacy in the legislature is the power struggle between groups that support the passage of the advocacy into law and those that hinder the process.

The paper can probably expand on this power struggle by describing, in each movement, how different players (especially the opposing forces) struggle for power. In addition, it would also be good to study the efforts of FDC, SNR, Tobin tax, and fair trade in dealing with the power struggle in advocacy work.



ZURAIIDA MAE CABILO:

I intentionally excluded the anti-corruption movement in my paper because I believe that there are already existing mechanisms in government in support of their cause. The efforts of the anti-corruption movement, therefore, are not alternatives but *supplements*. The anti-corruption movement supplements the legislative measures to combat corruption.

Compared to the other movements, the anti-corruption movement does not introduce mechanisms or strategies. Several laws against corruption have already been passed since the 1980s, but corruption remains prevalent. Given this scenario, the anti-corruption movement crafts initiatives based on existing laws, initiatives that will strengthen the implementation or even the enforcement of these laws. Furthermore, the movement is also constantly drawing up monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the government is doing its job and to promote a corruption-free society.

I will now move on to respond to the comment on whether the movements I have studied truly promote the interests of their stakeholders. In my presentation, I made a distinction between the constituency of the social movements and their stakeholders. These movements are made up of different groups, each carrying its own issues. The more important question, however, is, who has a stake in these alternatives presented? Who will be affected, positively or negatively? Essentially, the stakeholders are the general public. Thus the role of social movements is to distill the different expression of interests of the general public. Social movements undertake initiatives such as popular campaigns and popular education advocacies to broaden their reach. They try to cut through conflicting interests in society by looking at commonalities and articulating them through proposed alternatives.

In response to the final comment, I did not discuss the concept of power struggle because it was not discussed in the case studies.



GLENDALopez WUI:

I think it is still important to include the anti-corruption movement in the study because the movement does have alternatives to offer. The vision of a corrupt-free society is itself an alternative, certainly different from how the state articulates it, so that has to be discussed in the paper. Although there are existing mechanisms on the level of policy, the movement continues to come up with innovations. For instance, the Procurement Watch was responsible for the passage of the Procurement Act Law even though laws on anti-corruption were already in place.

ROGER BIROSEL (EARTH SAVERS MOVEMENT):

There seems to be too much liberty in the use of the terms “social movements” and “civil-society movements.” I, for one, do not recognize FDC, SNR, and TAN as social movements. We need to clarify the use of these terms because they are not interchangeable. Second, the presentation pointed out only two global realities, the failure of the Soviet experiment and the continuing success of the Washington consensus. It did not mention the emerging Shanghai consensus. That is another global reality, which should be taken into consideration in the analysis. Finally, I would like to go back to Mr. Royandoyan’s comment on national, local, and regional realities of trade. I agree with Mr. Royandoyan that the paper should frame the analysis of fair trade movement with those structures in mind.

**ANGELITO MANALILI (COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, UP-DILIMAN):**

Discussions on social movements have been going on since yesterday but what we really need to see is how these movements actually operate from the ground. For instance, a comment was raised yesterday on how the observations resonate on the ground. So, I would like to see a discussion on social movements wherein you find a concrete mobilization of the masses. One example is fair trade. The discourse and action are international in character but it is also national as well as local. The problem, however, is at the local level because the masses whom we are supposed to serve are

absent in the discourse. The intricacies of the issue, particularly the concrete realities—the difficulties experienced by the farmer-peasants themselves—are not really discussed.

DONALD MARASIGAN (COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES):

I have simple questions on the Tobin tax: Who imposes this tax? What is the tax base? Who are the taxpayers? Is there any other country in the world that imposes the Tobin tax? Will civil society ask Congress to pass the bill on the Tobin tax?

FILOMENO STA. ANA III:

Tobin tax is basically a currency transaction tax. The objective of the Tobin tax is to arrest the volatility of the exchange rate, to arrest speculation. Over the years though, the Tobin tax has been seen as a way to generate revenues to finance development. Even if you have a very modest tax rate or even a low tax rate, this would still generate a lot of revenues worldwide, which in turn could be used for financing development.

With regard to the prospect of Tobin tax being realized, the tax has gained more currency or popularity in the North. In highly developed countries, the tax is more feasible, given that many of the financial centers are found in more mature economies. There are various forms of taxing, of using taxation as an instrument to curb volatility. I think that is the debate here in the Philippines. The debate is not really about Tobin tax itself. Tobin tax is just one instrument; there are other ways of curbing speculation. The debate here concerns the most appropriate way of curbing capital speculation.

Some parliaments, especially in Europe, have come out with resolutions supporting the Tobin tax. However, the Tobin tax can be realized only if there is a critical mass of countries supporting such tax. A country cannot do Tobin tax alone. Coordination is key in an effective Tobin tax scheme. So the first step really is to gather a critical mass of countries. These should be countries where you can find financial centers, considering that multiple transactions are involved in the process. London, New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Tokyo are examples of these countries.



PABLO ROSALES (PAMBANSANG KATIPUNAN NG MAKABAYANG MAGBUBUKID [NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NATIONALIST PEASANTS]):

The plight of small farmers and fisherfolk is a long-standing issue. The complete social transformation necessary in the countryside has always been a major advocacy agenda, but the situation has not really improved for us. The government's agrarian reform program, as we all know, is highly contentious and had done little to palliate the situation. At present, one of the major problems of small farmers and fisherfolk is the increasing cost of production. Such a burden directly impedes on our livelihood.

The alternative that stakeholders need is authentic, comprehensive reform—improvement in the oppressive mode of production and the entire industry in general.

With regard to the advocacy of the fair trade movement, farmers do not have to be groomed to be capitalists. Many of the producers are farmworkers who do not have control over production. Instead, they are being used by landlords for profit. What they earn is certainly not commensurate with the labor they render.

The real alternative we need is comprehensive development in the agricultural countryside and the complete freedom of the laborers from the clutches of capitalists, and even from the entire system of globalization. International policies, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, are severely detrimental to our livelihood. I hope that the paper can be expanded to involve the concerns of the agricultural laborers.

ARIES ARUGAY (DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UP-DILIMAN):

The presentation has given us a sample of the proposed alternatives of social movements that were studied for the research project. These alternatives deal with issues of corruption, debt, and trade.

One of the panel reactors commented that the interests of the stakeholders are well articulated and represented by the civil-society movements. Whether the stakeholders are receptive or not is a function of the presence of independent-minded lawmakers. A question was raised whether the public remains receptive to these alternatives. While the paper more or less affirms this notion, I think the question needs to be validated.

Lastly, while there is a repertoire of alternative collective action as part of the mobilization strategy, it has been recognized that even this forms part of the conventional. Conventional strategies never go out of fashion, but there should be innovation even in traditional forms of collective action.

I noted one statement in an earlier panel that the media's job is to make the important interesting and the interesting relevant. Allow me to revise that, as a closing statement for our panel. I think the challenge for civil-society movements is to make the alternatives feasible and palatable. If we do that, we will no longer have TINA but TIVA—"There Is Viable Alternative."

