



Development NGOs, Semiclientelism, and the State in the Philippines: From “Crossover” to Double-crossed

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ABSTRACT. Civil-society participation continues to be a considerable focus of debate surrounding politics and public-policy making at international and national scales, especially in the developing world. Important examples of such processes have occurred in the Philippines. The Philippine polity is widely regarded as embodying a culture of clan-based politics entailing considerable relationships of clientelism and semiclientelism. Yet there is also considerable evidence of widespread civil-society activism. This paper examines how politically left-of-center development nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and people’s organizations (POs) have attempted to “crossover” to state positions in order to implement social and economic reforms. Select engagement by key personnel from the NGO sphere has often been premised on the notion that it was aimed at transforming these features of Philippine politics. Engagement with two recent and (claimed to be) reforming governments has not led to positive outcomes. The Philippine experience, for the most part, is an expression of the problematic assumptions that have tended to inform the debate over civil society and state interaction in many developing-country contexts. Such conceptions have been inserted into an all-encompassing notion of democratic transition, whereby political and economic liberalization are supposed to emerge in synergy, with civil society acting as a form of “stabilizer” compensating for and complementing the role of the state. Given the predominance of such weak states as the Philippines in the developing world, it is important to consider what the impacts of development NGOs participation may be. Most important, what may be the impacts of such forms of participation in a society and polity characterized by entrenched clientelist relationships? Contrasting a Gramscian analysis with Putnam-inspired conceptions of civil society that underpin the transition model, the paper argues that far from being a conditioning force on the state, civil society is itself a sphere where clientelism and semiclientelism predominate. So powerful are these forces, that arguably well-intentioned NGO personnel who previously adopted a critical stance toward neo-clientelism ultimately become absorbed by these relationships.

KEYWORDS. civil society clientelism semiclientelism development NGOs Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Civil-society participation continues to be a considerable focus of debate surrounding politics and public-policy making at international and national scales, especially in the developing world. Considerable emphasis has emerged in recent years on the inclusion of civil-society representation in deliberations on policy making and design. However, considerable debate surrounds the definitions and boundaries of what exactly civil society is. Forms of engagement in the state realm vary from input into policy making, to accepting areas of central responsibility within the state itself. The World Bank and other international agencies have come to emphasize the role of civil-society participation through its Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) formulation processes, and most recently the World Bank-Civil Society Global Policy Forum (World Bank 2006). Substantial effort has now gone into developing indicators of the strength of civil-society participation at the national level, with international reports now appearing each year (sponsored by the World Alliance for Citizen Participation [CIVICUS]) (Anheier 2004). A general consensus that has arguably emerged is that active citizen involvement and engagement with the state is a precondition for effective governance and improvements to social well-being. Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the forms and nature of this engagement and the outcomes vary considerably.

The Philippines is an important example of where civil society-government activism and engagement has occurred in a developing-world context. Redemocratization occurred in 1986, after a period of authoritarian dictatorship. Throughout the 1990s various efforts were initiated by the proliferating number of civil-society organizations to engage with aspects of government policy making, especially in the areas of sustainable development, and agrarian and social reform. On the one hand, some consultative mechanisms were established in these sectors. On the other, key personnel from politically left-of-center nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) that defined themselves as belonging to the progressive and socially reformist section of civil society were recruited ("crossed-over") to the executive staff of both the Estrada and Arroyo governments in 1999 and 2001. The outcomes of this engagement—in both cases—have not been positive. These governments eventually became embroiled in controversy over corruption and, in the case of Arroyo, allegations of electoral fraud (Reid 2006). Modest achievements in the design and

implementation of social reform have proved to be limited in effect and fragile in resilience. A deep cynicism now exists over the capacity of any civil-society organization to have substantive impacts on policy formation and implementation.

The Philippine experience, for the most part, is an expression of the problematic assumptions that have tended to inform the debate over civil society and state interaction in many developing-country contexts. On the one hand, the very definition and coherence of the concept of civil society remain ambiguous and contested. Recent analyses have focused mainly on the value of cultivating different societies' spheres of "associational activity." Such conceptions have been inserted into an all-encompassing notion of democratic transition, whereby political and economic liberalization are supposed to emerge in synergy, with civil society acting as a form of "stabilizer" compensating for and complementing the role of the state (Khilnani 2001). This paper focuses specifically on how development NGOs have attempted to "cross over" to state positions in order to implement social and economic reforms. On the other hand, other forms of analysis have tended to emphasize the historical and structural dimensions of experiences of democratization and associated trends toward enhanced social inclusion. Far from positing a "neat" complement between civil society and the consolidation of state power and markets, a dynamic conflict of social forces is emphasized. States and the hegemonic historical blocs of forces that dominate them are invariably forced to concede to alteration in power and social reforms through dynamics of conflict and transformation. Civil society—broadly conceived—far from being a conditioning force on the state, is itself often a sphere where clientelism predominates. So powerful are these forces that arguably well-intentioned NGO personnel who previously adopted a critical stance toward clientelism ultimately became absorbed by these relationships.

Moreover, the specificities of developing-world and postcolonial contexts invariably promote complex variations of these historical processes. Recent analyses of developing states have tended to emphasize the dynamics of states and society interactions. The "embeddedness" of postcolonial states and the lack of autonomy of the (weak) state from the power of elite actors have consistently acted as brakes on sustained capital accumulation and national development (Evans 1995; Migdal 1988). Invariably, there emerge relationships of power that have been broadly defined as clientelist in both historical and contemporary

literatures. Clientelism entails patterns of service provision and resource distribution that overprivilege some groups and exclude others. As social formations undergo varying levels of transformation—with the emergence of pro-democratic mass social movements—some changes become evident in the form of clientelism. As more overt forms of co-optation and authoritarianism are reduced, more subtle methods of neoclientelism emerge. These are often based on bargaining processes and incorporation of social-movement leaders into hegemonic blocs of power (Fox 1994, 157-58). The Philippines has been the focus of traditional analyses of clientelism. The combination of precolonial and postcolonial relations have entrenched relationships of power that have entailed authoritarianism, clientelism, and persistently high levels of poverty and exclusion. These have been variously conceptualized in terms of historic bloc (Hedman 2006; Reid 2006), a lack of state autonomy (Abinales and Amoroso 2005), or the outcomes of local processes of bossism and the control of the state by familial clans (McCoy 1993; Sidel 1999). This paper extends this literature by considering how newer forms of neo-clientelism have emerged in the context of redemocratization and attempts by regimes to give the appearance of engaging in measures to counteract poverty.

Given the predominance of such weak states as the Philippines in the developing world, it is important to consider what the impacts of civil-society participation may be—more important, what may be the impacts of such forms of participation in a society and polity characterized by entrenched semiclientelist relationships? Posing such a question in the Philippine context begins to challenge the “genteel” notion of democratic transition and the attributed role for civil society. Engagement with the state brings distinct challenges and dilemmas and suggests that activist political groups—whether NGOs or POs—would be better served by being mindful of the structural and historical constraints that invariably set limits on the capacities for intervention in policy making in order to achieve social and political changes.

The paper considers these issues by assessing the period of civil-society engagement in the Philippines from mid-1990s until 2006. Utilizing both secondary sources and in-depth content analysis of interviews with key participants, it argues that the Philippine experience suggests that some NGOs and POs, far from confronting issues of entrenched semiclientelism, are themselves embedded in these very relationships. First, an appraisal is made of the main conceptual

approaches to civil society, which compares and contrasts the democratic transitional and structural historical approaches in the context of assessing postcolonial states and politics. It follows with a Gramscian analysis similar to—although diverging in important ways from—Hedman’s (2006) application of these concepts to the Philippines.

The analysis is linked to a discussion of the history of NGO/PO engagement with the state in the Philippines. Second, the elements of the Philippine crisis are examined in this context, playing particular attention to the depth of semiclientelist relations, the eventual stalling of attempts at social reform, and the collapse of consultative mechanisms. The paper concludes by reflecting on the general implications of the Philippine experience for issues of so-called state-civil society relations in developing-world contexts and the condition in which it is advisable that NGO and PO personnel enter into government positions.

CIVIL SOCIETY, CLIENTELISM, AND SEMICLIENTELISM

Civil society has become a ubiquitous term in debates on politics and policy making, and is used to categorize very diverse phenomena. The first part of the section examines the contemporary neo-Tocquevillean discussions of the concept. This is then compared and contrasted with a Gramscian interpretation of civil society. Particular attention is given to considering the relationship that is implied between each concept of civil society and understandings of clientelism.

The Neo-Tocquevilleans and Democratic Transition

There are diverse approaches to the concept of civil society, ranging from its first uses in the antiquity, in early-modern Europe and North America, to debates on contemporary governance (Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001). In early-modern Europe and North America, civil society tended to encompass the facets of “commercial society” that were struggling to emerge from the impacts of the premodern state’s despotism. The most significant text is Tocqueville’s (1988) classic analysis of the ways associations and institutions created the foundations for democratic consensus to emerge in the North American context. Decentralization and deliberation are represented as the central feature of the North American democratic culture (Nord and Bermeo 2000, xiii).¹ Tocqueville’s discussions of these issues were positive about the role of political associations and parties in the North American

context. The vitality of and, indeed, the conflicts between these formations, were regarded as intrinsic to the process of democratic deliberation.

There has been a revival of these concepts, in an altered form, since the 1960s. Civil society has increasingly been used to designate the sphere of “associational activity.” Putnam’s (2000) arguments, in particular, rapidly developed into an almost all-encompassing intellectual hegemony on policy debate. It is this conception of civil society that has been integrated into policy analysis and appraisal. The main implication of the latter debates on issues of democratization in the developing world is a form of neo-Tocquevillean conception of civil society, whereby civil society is envisaged as a complex of associational activity that both complements (through facilitating debate and consensus forming) and constrains the state from arbitrary despotism. Whereas Tocqueville placed considerable emphasis on the political associations, Putnam tends to emphasize the value of usually apolitical associations and clubs. Their value is not primarily their contribution to forms of direct deliberation and political debate. Rather, it is their contribution to the formation of social capital and relationships of trust and reciprocity that is to be valued.

While a consensus among these types of agents has emerged over the desirability of civil society, the exact boundaries and purported benefits of civil society are a source of ongoing debate. A consensus definition—determined for policy consideration and assessment of the relative strengths of civil society in different national contexts—is offered by Anheier: “Civil society is the sphere of institutions, organizations and individuals located between the family, the state and market, in which people voluntarily associate to advance common interests” (2004, 9). Even this definition, however, is vague: are employer associations and political parties included, for instance? Ambiguities notwithstanding, civil society has become a strong focus of political and development policy debate, with a view that the promotion of civil society contributes to enhanced development and governance outcomes.

Operating on these assumptions, multilateral development institutions, such as the World Bank, have instituted formal processes of involving civil-society organizations in policy deliberation at various levels as part of its Comprehensive Development Framework (Wolfensohn 1999; World Bank 2006).² At the national scale, for example, Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper processes have

institutionalized civil-society participation, although assessments of these vary in quality (Godfrey, n.d.). More generally, Putnam's arguments are further depoliticized through their application to development economics. The value of associational activity and participation is primarily conceptualized in terms of the purported reductions in transaction costs that they generate in service provision and the assistance that they entail for better "targeting" of expenditures and investments (World Bank 2004). Ultimately the utility of civil society is conceptualized in economic terms, although this, in turn, is used as a basis to justify support for certain forms of political institutions.

Moreover, the adoption of the concept of civil society within development policy circles has generally entailed its situation within an all-encompassing model of democratic transition (Harriss, Stokke, and Tornquist 2004, 4). The "post-Washington consensus" policy model implies that for countries to fully benefit from economic liberalization, they must also undertake substantive reforms toward democratic transition and changes to institutional governance (Fine, Lapavtsas, and Pincus 2001, 14, 15). Of course, contradictions are associated with the notion of transition, as economic policy, in particular, tends to be withdrawn from the domain of democratic decision making and given over to external and internal financial institutions (Teivainen 2006, 22). As noted above, the World Bank, drawing heavily on Putnam's use of the term, has assumed a hegemonic status in promoting the concept and desirability in developing-country contexts. The World Bank's CDF model strongly links the concept of civil society to implicitly desirable goals of good governance and democratic transition (Wolfensohn 1999). It was assumed that civil-society organizations, in particular, possessed a comparative advantage in delivering services to and communicating the concerns of socially excluded constituencies (World Bank 2004). The latter entails benefits, such as reduced corruption, better identification of the needs of impoverished citizens, and reductions in the power of clientelist relationships.

The conception of clientelism that follows from the democratic transition model rests on a revived and modified notion of dualism. Clientelism was originally conceptualized during the period of modernization theory's highest popularity as an expression of traditionalist relationships. An optimistic assumption was made: as modernizing values eventually came to predominate in developing societies, clientelist relations would decline in importance (Scott 1972). Huntington's (1972) revisionist view argued that, to the

contrary, clientelism would perhaps persist and even be reinforced as modernization initially occurred. State elites leading the process of modernization would initially focus on ways of consolidating their powers through various mechanisms. The focus of the contemporary governance and development literature and policy is, more or less, based on a revival of the dualist thesis. Democratic empowerment is conflated with reductions in clientelist relations and patrimonialism. Evidence is cited, however, that reductions in clientelist relations can have negative consequences for poor and marginal communities that no longer receive the benefits this entailed (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2005, 200). The dualist notion, however, continues to underpin most thinking about development and governance.

Indeed, the standard formulations of the World Bank and Putnam emphasize the negative impacts of clientelism on development. It entails favored treatment and distribution for certain groups and increased opportunities for rent seeking and corruption (Keefer 2005; World Bank 2004, 7, 48). The role of civil society, along with the other actors involved in the process of transition, is to reduce the negative influences of these processes. The particular role of civil society is to act as a promoter of accountability of the state and its institutions. NGOs and POs, in particular, are envisaged as operating in a way that complements the state's efforts at facilitating economic growth. Encouraging this engagement reduces the transaction costs associated with projects and increases the accountability of state institutions. A neat complement is situated between NGOs promoting democratic empowerment and NGOs reducing inefficiencies in economic relationships.

Many of these arguments appear oblivious to the considerable body of literature that disputes both the notion of a complement between economic reform and political inclusion, and the notion that civil-society engagement is a necessarily positive phenomenon. First, it is far from clear if antagonism exists between Tocqueville's imagined ideal of civic life in the United States and the existence of clientelism. Tocqueville's discussion of the patterns of civic governance ignores the beginnings of the forms of political "machines" that would later constitute the basis for the classical emergence of patron-client relations in American cities (Gastil and Keith 2005, 8-10). Given these historical experiences, it seems unlikely, therefore, that the *de facto* existence of empowered civil-society sectors will necessarily lead to reductions of clientelism.

Relatively recent and cross-national studies tend to reinforce these types of conclusions. Comparative studies suggest that far from declining, clientelism is adaptive and coexists with a variety of contexts (Roniger and Gunes-Ayata 1994). Clearly, civil-society organizations themselves are already entangled in these relationships as a means of preserving and advancing their own power vis-à-vis the state and other actors. One aspect of the diversity of civil-society agents is that these range from informal social movements to hierarchical and entrenched organizations. These institutions can transform clientelism into new forms. A simple conflation of an active civil society with advances toward democratization should be rejected (Roniger 1994, 1-18). Detailed and local case studies of civil society-state interaction in the context of democratization also reinforce these observations. Studies of Latin American and South Asian contexts, for instance, suggest the state is often able to co-opt and contain grassroots organizations that were previously critical of clientelist relations (Choup 2004; Fox 1996; Lewis 2004). They are further entangled in the clientelist relations of power that ultimately contradict with what were often original aims of achieving social and political reforms.

Second, criticism of so-called civil-society promotion programs has been registered in some areas, as national-based groups have become recipients of funds and resources from partner organizations that are seen as promoting questionable aspects of US foreign policy. Arguably genuine grassroots-based social movements are displaced by foreign donor-funded organizations (Gindin 2005). The cynicism is reinforced by the considerable literature that disputes the uncritical acceptance of the term and proscribed role of civil society. Rodan (1996) argues that civil society itself is “the locus of a range of inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity, race and sexual preference” (1996, 22). Rivera (2005, 476) notes the difficulty, in the case of the Philippines itself, of referring to civil society as a singular or unitary entity.³ It encompasses various forms of church and religious organizations, to development-oriented NGOs with varying ideologies and political outlooks. Associations can be gender or ethnically exclusive, or can be dedicated to maintaining class privileges. Civil society is such a broad and “paradoxical” category that it consists of both democratic and anti-democratic associations, liberal and illiberal organizations (Foley and Edwards 1996). They can be committed to resolving conflicts through peaceable means or by facilitating violence. There is perhaps “good” and “bad” civil society, with the latter

including “hate groups” (Chambers and Kopstein 2001). Other comparative studies of civil society in Asia reinforce these conclusions. Civil-society mobilization—including in the Philippines—should not be equated a priori with pro-democratic outcomes (Alagappa 2006; Franco 2006). Clearly, therefore, the notion that a unified category of civil society can somehow help a priori to facilitate democratization, needs to be rejected. Civil society is, more often than not, embedded in relationships of clientelism

Third, some organizations and components of (perhaps ostensibly “good”) civil society clearly do claim to contest the existence of clientelism and inequitable relationships of power (Rodan 1996). As indicated above, the scope of civil society encompasses diverse actors ranging from social movements to highly formalized organizations. Social movements often have a base within or at least claim to represent excluded social layers that may indeed contest inequitable relationships of power.

Yet again the literature on social movements and clientelism demonstrates a long-standing awareness of the dangers of co-optation and incorporation by elite actors in the politics of social movements and their leaders (Barker, Johnson, and Lavalette 2001; Mayo 2004). The standard model of clientelism tends to imply high levels of authoritarianism, violence, and threats of violence. Social formations inevitably undergo forms of change, such as agrarian transformation, industrialization, and urbanization. Correspondingly, alterations in structures of power lead to openings for social movements to emerge and more directly contest the power of historical blocs of power. Here alterations can occur in clientelist relations whereby mechanisms of power become more focused on the subtle co-optation of social-movement leaders. The resulting forms of semiclientelism have become increasingly apparent in different developing-country contexts (Fox 1994, 157-59). Social and political mobilizations have clearly been channeled into clientelist relations, especially in Latin American and Caribbean contexts (Fox 1994; Scott 2003). In the Philippines itself, clientelism has been a factor leading to divisions and splits in the peasant and other social movements (Kerkvliet 1995, 416-17).⁴ There is a considerable history of elite political actors and party leaders selectively co-opting activists and offering token reforms to constituencies in return for political support. This was the rationale of traditional populism in Latin America (Abers 1998). Even social movements and

components that may ostensibly claim to oppose semiclientelism are susceptible to co-optation.

Nevertheless, current policy concerning development, governance, and civil society often remains framed in depoliticized and neo-Tocquevillean categories and assumptions. Civil society, however, is not at all necessarily antagonistic to clientelism. This actuality of inclusion into clientelist relations extends to sections of civil society and components of social movements that may claim to be opposed to such inequitable relations.

Gramsci and the Historic Bloc

Given these points, an alternative conception of civil society must first be presented before considering the implications for the Philippine case. A starting point for such an analysis is the Gramscian approach.

Gramsci's usage of the term "civil society," in particular, is notably ambiguous and contradictory (Cox 1999, 3-28). A general point needs to be made—the generally fragmentary nature of Gramsci's writings and the proliferation of interpretation this has helped entail means that there is at best a limited consensus on many concepts and their applications (Ives 2004).⁵ Initially, civil society appears to be considered as a terrain through which hegemonic relations are reproduced outside the state to sustain mechanisms of political power of particular historically constituted blocs. In contrast to the Tocquevilleans, Gramsci locates civil society as a central component of "traditional" relationships of power (clientelism and semiclientelism).

Equally, Gramsci (1972, 105-20) argued that similar agents existed in the context of Northern Italy and its experience of modernity. Italy's passage to modernity and the hegemony of capital—the *Risorgimento*—remained a "passive revolution"; hence, the weak nature of dominant section of class interests meant these interests had to rely upon civil society to stabilize social relationships. In effect, what is widely referred to as clientelist relations, behaviors of passivity and dependence continued and were amplified with the emergence of modernity, which ultimately gave rise to the experience of fascism. A flourishing civil society, far from necessarily advancing forms of democratization and reducing the impacts of clientelism, can act to stabilize these relationships of power. Hence there is a strong continuity between Gramsci's formulations and the criticisms of civil society outlined above.

Without preempting the discussion on the historical context in the next section, it is important to acknowledge that Gramsci's

concepts have already been applied by other theorists to the Philippine case. Hedman (2006), in particular, makes a number of important observations and arguments concerning agents involved in the process of redemocratization after 1986. For Hedman (2006, 1-14) the historic bloc of power relies on institutions and relations outside the state, such as the Catholic Church and the US colonial power and capital itself. The result has been a continual hegemonic process of control of oppositional movements. Popular mobilization for democracy occurred “in the name of civil society” whereby illusionary spectacles concealed the maintenance of the power of the dominant bloc and “passive revolution.” The bloc exercised its hegemony so that mobilization only resulted in the return of limited liberal democratic institutions rather than some form of substantive revolutionary power by the exploited classes themselves.

Clearly, such interpretations have a great deal of interpretive value. Forces within the hegemonic bloc did act to limit the outcomes of the anti-dictatorship movement. Yet there are real limits to such an explanation. Such applications of Gramsci’s concepts exhibit overdetermination and inflexibility. This tendency, in part, can be explained by the fragmented nature of Gramsci’s surviving texts and the heavily criticized “antimonies” implicit in some of his thinking and strategy (Anderson 1976; Davidson 1972). Still another trend was the corresponding reemergence of Gramsci’s ideas during the 1970s with the period of the highest popularity of Althusserian Marxism. The latter is well-known for the formulation “ideological state apparatuses” (Althusser 1977). Hedman (2006, 8), for instance, cites one such text at a critical point of her argument. These apparatuses ensure the power of capital via the ideological interpellation of actors and institutions within society and the state. It appears that Althusser ultimately concludes that social formations are so rigidly structured that few institutions exist as counterforces. Ultimately, it appears that only the Althusserians themselves possess the scientific capability to understand relationships of power (Curthoys 1988). The conclusion is a reading of Marxism in which subjects and agency appear almost entirely to disappear.⁶

However, Gramsci’s arguments on civil society, the state, and the historic bloc need to be understood in light of broader textual evidence concerning his philosophy, and politics. These demonstrate conclusions that differ significantly from those of the Althusserians. Two themes emerge from a broader engagement with Gramsci’s texts, which suggest

that any attempted fusion with Althusserian themes is problematic at best. First, at the deeper ontological and conceptual level, Gramsci's particular engagement with Marxism occurs in the form of an extended critique and appraisal of Croce's historicist political philosophy. Gramsci seeks to replace the latter's idealist view of the evolution of thought with an analysis grounded in identifying the material, social, and cultural effects on culture (Ives 2004, 9). Within this evolution, though, Gramsci is clear that language and culture of a national context are contested by those who consciously construct counterhegemonies. In other words, Gramsci's conception of culture and ideology varies significantly from the Althusserians' closed structuralism and determinism.

Second, the notion of the "war of position" occupies an important place within Gramsci's thinking (1972, 238-39). Again, ambiguities surround the use of the term. Yet it is clear that it implies a process of ideological contestation by "organic intellectuals" (Ives 2004, 101). It is less clear, though, how to contest these relations within civil society, although Gramsci clearly sees the communist party and allied institutions as central to this ("the prince"). This has two implications. First, it calls into question readings of Gramsci that regard civil society as a sphere through which the hegemony of the historic bloc is maintained. "The prince" is much involved in the ideological struggle in this sphere as others. The value of Gramsci's theory is perhaps the attention to developing language and forms of autonomous organization outside of the dominant bloc. There is considerable literature that argues such a position from a Gramscian position, and empirical evidence suggests that civil-society organizations can play *both* co-optive and counterhegemonic roles (see Katz 2006). A similar and influential reading of Gramsci is noted by Alagappa (2006, 29). Of course, the weight of history has perhaps eroded the privileged role given by Gramsci to the notion of all-powerful communist party. Recent Gramscian analysis tends to specify the agency of transnational and nonstate-centered social movements (Morton 2007, 205). Ironically these very groups often themselves adopt the title and identity as being part of global civil society.⁷

The implication of this more fluid and dialectical reading of Gramsci is that clearly civil society and civil-society organizations are both a sphere of hegemony and involved in its contestation. The Catholic Church hierarchy, as Hedman (2006) correctly points out, is clearly part of the hegemonic bloc in the Philippines. Yet the process

of Vatican II and formation of Base Christian Communities led to the widespread politicization and the emergence of liberation theology (Lowy 1996). Even a deeply and historically based institution such as this can express contradictions and countertendencies. Similar features are clearly evident in NGOs and POs. Conflict invariably takes place within this sphere, with important roles played by competing “functional” and “organic” intellectuals (Gramsci 1972, 15-16). Social movements, POs, NGOs, and other institutions are invariably spheres of contestations between competing ideologies.

Two points flow from this discussion concerning democratization, development, and clientelism. First, a linkage can also be posited between Gramsci’s conceptions of civil society and different approaches to and understandings of democratization. “Depoliticized” policy institutions, like the World Bank, tend to invariably favor a model of democratization based on a notion of gradual transition, whereby political and economic liberalization progress in tandem. Yet other historical models emphasize issues of structural transformation and the diverse and conflict-centered role of social classes and other agents (Harriss, Stokke, and Tornquist 2004, 1-28). In such models, social movements (rather than the abstract category civil society) act more as socially disruptive forces, demanding responses from the state to various demands for political inclusion. This suggests that there is a certain inherent difficulty in trying to conceive of political and social change as being somehow the effect of interactions between homogenous entities such as civil society and the state. Civil society is a sphere of contestation, and development NGOs are subject to competing ideological forces.

Second, as resulting social struggles intensify, the operation of hegemonic devices of ensuring spontaneous consent and coercion within civil society can alter. More traditional and “brutish” forms of clientelism give way to subtle forms of semiclientelist relationships. The state and the historical bloc can adopt discourses of good governance and poverty alleviation, for instance, while maintaining actual policies that worsen the conditions of subaltern classes (trade liberalization, reducing price control, and regressive taxation) (Fox 1994). In this process, NGO and PO leaders can be co-opted to give the appearance of legitimacy to the state and political elite.

As the above reading of Gramsci suggests, however, civil society composes multiple interests and components that are both in conflict with and under the hegemony of dominant blocs. At certain historical

junctures, antagonistic social forces find expression through organizations, social movements, and institutions that may entail alterations to relationships of power and democratization. Yet such struggles may equally result in partial alterations and compromises that in themselves result in new forms of clientelism and semiclientelism. Therefore, the outcomes of such political and social mobilization, in terms of alterations in clientelist relationships, are variable. Civil society, far from playing the role ascribed to it by the transition model of democratization, is itself subject to relationships such as semiclientelism.

PHILIPPINE NGOS, POs, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The issues of how civil society can interact with processes of democratization and clientelist relationships have found considerable expression in the Philippines. The historical context of these interactions is closely related to the history of redemocratization in the Philippines that followed the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986.

The first point that must be emphasized is the degree to which Philippine politics and society are strongly imbued with relationships of clientelism and that their operation is an important component of the ways the historical bloc maintains its hegemony (Hedman 2006; Reid 2006, 1005-7). The modalities of this rule have been conceptualized in various ways as “bossism” and “cacique democracy” (Anderson 1988; Sidel 1999). The operation of mechanisms of formal republican and liberal democracy coexisted with localized power elites between 1946 and 1972. These centers of power were built on various forms of consent and coercion, including clientelism. The Philippines has been a central focus of some of the studies on clientelism undertaken since the late 1960s. The political system, in particular, was strongly characterized by local complexes of patronage. Formally a democratic regime, the classic studies demonstrated that power was in actuality concentrated and shared among numerous landowning clans (Hollnsteiner 1963; Stauffer 1966; Lande 1965). The resulting pattern of social and economic development ensured that the Philippine state continued to be “weak” and lacked the autonomy to direct resources toward overcoming structural obstacles to economic growth. Landowning capital was able to eventually halt and dismantle the extensive regime of import substitution and exchange controls that helped to underpin the relatively high level of industrialization that occurred in the 1950s (Abinales and Amoroso 2005; Rivera 1994).

The interlude of Marcos's authoritarian rule (1972-1986), despite initial claims of pursuing modernization, created some alterations in these relationships. The historic bloc diversified its economic bases of power away from purely landownership and agriculture toward services and real estate. The first EDSA⁸ uprising of 1986 resulted in the restoration of a similar pattern of elite political rule and clientelism that had existed before 1972 (Anderson 1988; Coronel et al. 2004). The Aquino regime initially promised substantial social reform, but quickly lapsed into a series of crises. This was followed by the Fidel Ramos administration between 1993 and 1998. Ramos introduced a series of contradictory economic reforms combining aggressive liberalization with the rhetoric of forming national industries. Nostalgia for the purported efficiency and vision of the Ramos administration is sometimes expressed (Bello et al. 2006). Yet the regional economic crisis of 1997 and 1998 tended to undermine some of the improvements in economic growth that occurred in the mid-1990s. The distribution of these benefits was rather limited to layers that benefited most directly from liberalization (Reid 2006). The context emerged for the emergence of different forms of regimes that implied some level of reformist orientation. The contradictions between the appearance of democratic rule and the lack of substantial benefits to the poor, combined with high levels of social-movement activism, meant that the state and the historic bloc had to respond in new ways. More sophisticated measures of semiclientelism emerged whereby bargaining and co-optation involving social-movement leaders emerged during the mid- to late 1990s.

At the same time, democratization and its aftermath in the 1990s were accompanied by two complementary changes in the nature and forms of political organizing in the Philippines. On the one hand, there was a proliferation of civil-society activism with the consolidation and emergence of diverse interest groups all making considerable calls on the state for different policy changes (Rivera 2002). Likewise, a process of formalization and bifurcation developed among the social movements that had developed during the anti-Marcos dictatorship movement. As Boudreau (1996, 75-76) notes, NGOs "transformed activism" in important ways as they "frequently set out to implement some project ... for a specific constituency rather than on behalf of an entire class." The development project focus—usually centered on aspects of livelihood promotion, service delivery, or advocacy—entailed more cooperative relations than adversary with the state. Other more traditional POs

continued to operate in a confrontational way: notably those linked to the now fragmenting revolutionary left. An alternative vision of political and social development appeared to fragment into a succession of projects. Semiformal processes of propagandizing and organization gave way to a regimen of donor and state liaison, project proposals, and evaluation. Clearly these trends were evident in the broad spectrum of development-centered NGOs. They also had an impact on the left-leaning or “progressive” component of civil society.

On the other hand, the project focus of NGOs did not necessarily—as Boudreau (1996, 76) seems to imply—retreat from engaging with the state and state-centered political action. It is more accurate to think in terms of change in the nature of this engagement. One of the first notable political groupings among the progressive NGO sphere to consistently utilize the rhetoric of civil society was the Movement for Popular Democracy. This emerged originally as a current within and then breaking from the Communist Party of the Philippines in the mid- to late 1980s (Reid 2000, 37-38). The Popular Democrats argued—in the context of an anti-dictatorship movement against Marcos—to confront the state and establish a stage of “popular democracy”: a dense web of popular councils and other institutions that could transform the state as a precursor to “national democratic” revolution via coalition government of national bourgeois and workers/peasant-based parties.

The focus of the popular democratic discourse later moved further away from these quasi-insurrectionist notions of challenging state power and adopted the terminology of civil society, alongside adoption of more pluralist politics (see Serrano 1994). Documents from the early to late 1990s suggest that the popular democrats conceived civil society as consisting of a body of politically and socially progressive social movements and organizations (Esguerra 1996). Correspondingly, as the political situation changed and a pattern of elite-based democracy reemerged, the notions of popular democracy changed. While the ways such an alliance could be achieved varied considerably—even among former and current popular democrats—the goal subsequently became the establishment of the conditions for popular democracy through alliances with the most appropriate political clan (that now dominated the form of redemocratized Philippine state) with an interest in enacting substantive social reform (de la Torre 1996, 9-10). The focus on alliances with reforming clan is significant for the accommodation to semiclientelism that this seems to imply. While the form of any

political alliance with a dominant clan is not specified, there is a strong suggestion of the acceptance of existing political relationships as the starting point of any strategy of social reform.

At the same time, other actors within Philippine society increasingly adopted the notion and terminology of civil society. On the one hand, an increasing number of political networks turned toward the establishment of advocacy and development-based NGOs, especially in areas such as agrarian reform, the urban poor, women's rights, and environmental sustainability. International discourse concerning civil-society consultation began to influence political discourse in the Philippines. NGOs established national organizations and federations—such as the Caucus of Non-Government Development Organizations (CODE-NGO)—that came to be identified as “civil society” (CODE-NGO 2004). These sections of the development NGO sector were evolving similar conceptions and approaches to the state. The possibility of some forms of policy engagement and even entry into the state became an issue of debate.

Meanwhile, the Philippine state itself had increasingly conceded a role for civil society—including progressive NGOs—within its development strategy. The 1987 constitution and legislation, such as the 1992 Local Government Code, formalized various consultative mechanisms (Wui and Lopez 1997). The Aquino government had itself established early consultative forums on issues such as agrarian reform in the late 1980s (Franco 2006, 109; Gershman et al. 1997, 40-45). The Ramos government initiated various consultative measures: first, concerning sustainable development, then agrarian reform, and finally these were generalized as part of the Philippine state's social reform agenda in 1997. This established a National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), with sector representation for civil society (Reid 2005, 36-38). Emerging as they did at the end of Ramos's term, they tended to play a relatively marginal role. Conditions were created, however, for future governments to further institutionalize such processes.

By 1998, therefore, conditions were created for development NGOs being able to influence some aspects of government policy. Changes in the forms of NGO activism away from antagonism toward cooperation with the state had emerged. While a certain amount of drift toward project-based organization occurred, the potential for alliance formation with sectors of the Philippine elite-based political clans emerged as a realizable strategy of enacting social reform and

structural changes. Unfortunately, the terms of these alliances were not really specified.

FROM CROSSOVER TO DOUBLE CROSS

Two cycles subsequently occurred of NGO personnel being recruited into governments. The phase of “crossover” emerged whereby civil-society organizations and personnel began to take a stronger role in governments. Each ended ultimately with disillusionment and collapse according to an observable cycle.

Cycle 1: From Estrada to EDSA 2

The first stage of the “crossover” process commenced with the election of the “pro-poor” president and former actor Joseph Estrada in 1998. The notion of “crossover” was advanced by Joel Rocamora (2003), who noted the tendency for leaders from civil society to eventually be established in positions in the government, ostensibly with the purpose of achieving social reforms. Estrada’s political platform was vague at best. Yet his status as celebrity, compounded with the wide perceptions of the failure of governments headed by traditional politicians such as Aquino and Ramos, ensured that he receive a large share of votes from poorer constituencies (Franco 2006, 117). Estrada’s “pro-poor” image was reinforced when he established a “rainbow cabinet” that incorporated important leaders from the civil-society sector.

Two notable examples were Horacio Morales (a former leader of the popular democrats) and Karina Constantino-David.⁹ Morales had a considerable background as a political activist and leader in the NGO sector. His rationale for obtaining the position of secretary of the Department for Agrarian Reform was that the distribution process could be accelerated and further integrated into broader strategies of poverty reduction and economic growth (Morales 1999). Within progressive development NGOs, an approach of social reform had come to be conceptualized as the *bibingka* (rice or cassava cake) strategy of “applying heat” to the state from both above and below. Efforts at social reform by members of the executive would be complemented by grassroots social mobilization (Borras 1998). There were differing interpretations as to what the strategy meant, but generally there was acceptance that a variety of bureaucratic and local power-base issues posed a considerable obstacle to agrarian reform (Franco 2006, 115).

For Morales and others it appeared to imply developing a deep relationship with an elite political bloc on the rationale that such an alliance could lead to considerable structural and social changes. Hence, Morales played a crucial part in Estrada's campaign and candidacy (Rocamora 2003).

Constantino-David's entry into the government was not as deep-rooted. A progressive academic with considerable background as an activist, she was recruited by Estrada to head the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (Constantino-David 2001, 212). According to her own personal account, she was skeptical of the reforming potential of the Estrada administration. Yet Estrada himself invited her to take on the position with the rationale that he already had a "face"—Morales—that was responsible for the agrarian reform and poverty sector. Given the prevalence of issues of urban poverty, housing, and shelter in the Philippines, he needed a similar figure to oversee projects in this sphere (Constantino-David 2001, 213). In the first year of Estrada's administration there were numerous similar examples. There was the appearance of the involvement of important personnel from the development NGO sector in the administration and policy-making process.

From the standpoint of the entry of these key personnel, two immediate themes that correspond to aspects of semiclientelist politics and practices are visible. First, the reference that Constantino-David (2001) makes to the notion of Estrada needing a "face" to head certain areas of policy already suggests a certain superficiality underlying the appointments. There is concern for appearance of having representation in the cabinet and some rhetorical support for policy proposals. Yet there appears to be little consideration of granting more depth of commitment in terms of resources and an overall program of political and social reform. Second, there is a strongly personal nature in the approaches made by Estrada to the targets of his recruitment drive. Constantino-David's case is perhaps more common—involving an invitation to meeting and personal assurances of the government's commitment in the area. Morales case is more complex, indicating that his support from Estrada stems from the latter's stance as "outsider" in the sphere of elite-driven politics (Morales 1999). Of course, the degree of this outsider status is rather superficial, given Estrada's subsequently revealed reliance on traditional politicians and bases of support. It appears that Estrada successfully co-opted important leaders from the NGO sphere as a means of cultivating his "pro-poor"

image. There are considerable parallels here to clientelist politics in other contexts. A bargaining process emerges in which resources are distributed to favored organizations and entities (Fox 1994, 160).

Of course the limits of the access to power that these relationships of semiclientelism entailed became increasingly apparent. Estrada demonstrated an increasing reliance on arbitrary relationships and informal mechanisms of inclusion in policy making (Constantino-David 2001; Franco 2006). The appearance of commitment in these spheres of reform was contradicted by rival commitments to processes of privatizing the land reform process and social housing projects. The amounts of land distributed, however, actually declined in comparison to previous administrations (Morales and Putzel 2001, 3-15; Reyes 2003). Gradually many of the reformers from the development NGO sphere broke with the government, although notably not Morales.

The general outcome and eventual trajectory of the Estrada government are well known, culminating in the mobilization of over one million participants in the EDSA 2 uprising (Franco 2006; Rivera 2002; Reid 2001). Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo moved over to the opposition in mid-2000. Accusations of receipts of illegal gambling funds and other counts of graft and corruption led to a senate investigation. In October 2000 much of the now-oppositional NGOs and POs coalesced into a new coalition, the *Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino II* (Kompil II), with the explicit aim of ousting Estrada from power (Franco 2006, 123-24). The CODE-NGO, mentioned above, played a central role in this. By January 2001 most of Estrada's government had resigned, and the military withdrew support under pressure from mass demonstrations. Estrada agreed to "step aside" and Arroyo was sworn in as president.

The problems of entry into Estrada's government provoked some reflection among NGO and PO activists. As noted above, features of semiclientelism were already apparent in the process of Estrada's recruitment of state personnel. While noting the diversity of groups and individuals among the NGO/PO sphere, a consistent trend toward pragmatism and seeking dubious and even opportunistic alliances became apparent. One activist commented:

The problem with civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Philippines is that they tend to support political parties or personalities on a basis ... well it depends on the weather. At this time, depending on whether a certain group of CSOs will benefit. At another time another group will benefit. (Sta. Ana III 2003)

In other words, there are two sides of the bargaining process of neo-clientelism. On the “supply side” there was Estrada’s need for a “face” of reform. On the “demand side,” in keeping with the Gramscian analysis and the relationship between the state and civil society, the left-of-center development NGOs were not above accommodation to and acquiescence in the historic bloc.

Likewise, other assessments of the Estrada period were very negative. There was essentially a process of select involvement of key NGO leaders in return for the appearance of some form of deep-rooted support for Estrada among the poor. Rocamora (2003) states that when he was also offered a post in the government he concluded:

You are not even going to be in the second stream. You’re going to be the water boy. You won’t have any overall impact on the thrust of the administration. What’s going to happen is that you’ll just get used. You’ll get used to drum up some kind of organized manifestation of mass support for Estrada from the poor supporters of Estrada. You’ll be given small chunks of the bureaucracy. I’m not going to say don’t join. On the contrary, do as good a job as you can in your little corners of the bureaucracy.

The dynamics of manipulation and the formation of illusions emerged. Small pockets of authority were parceled out in areas of agrarian reform, housing, and service delivery. Meanwhile the real centers of policy making were kept out of reach. Worse still, the NGO leaders were used to establish creditability for creating support for Estrada despite the limits of the regime.

In sum, the first cycle of crossover did not end well. Reform achievements were limited, and the Estrada government eventually collapsed. While Estrada appealed as an outsider in the Philippine political process, the real centers of his support and their methods of operation were not substantially different from the established patterns of elite politics. Semiclientelism resulted in direct appointments of individuals to certain areas to give a “face” of reform to the government.

Cycle II: Arroyo, Civil Society, Civil Servants

Given these failures, how did development NGOs interact with the successor regime of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo? Surprisingly perhaps, very similar neo-clientelist processes emerged with the crossover of personnel.

Arroyo came to power on the basis of a considerable mass mobilization against a popular president who still had the appearance of being “pro-poor.” Arroyo herself came from very traditional political origins: daughter of a former president, has a doctorate degree in economics, and was a senator during Ramos’s term as president. Given this and the emphases of much of the donor policy discourse noted above, it may be assumed that Arroyo felt obliged to appear to give considerable attention to issues of poverty reduction and political reform. Arroyo’s inauguration speech foreshadowed some processes of governmental reform, measures to “reduce corruption, and that the Philippines’ politics of personality and patronage must give way to a new politics of party programs and process of dialogue with the people” (Arroyo 2001). While ambitious in some ways, the reforms did not amount to any measures that would redress the inherited historical obstacles to achieving sounder development outcomes. On the contrary, Arroyo’s speech was strongly imbued with a dual transition-based analysis of the Philippines achieving global economic competitiveness and a “world-class political system.”

It had become quite clear to the broad oppositional NGOs and POs that the central leaders of KOMPIL II—which acted as a secretariat of the movement—had become very close to Arroyo and the official opposition in late 2000 and 2001 (Franco 2006, 124). It was from among this layer that leaders were recruited and incorporated into Arroyo’s cabinet. Notably more marginal ministries—e.g., the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), which had figures such as Corazon Soliman—were established with secretaries and cabinet members from civil society (see Reid 2005, 33). Soliman (2006) claimed that they were aware of the limits of the Arroyo government, but argued there were strong pragmatic grounds for participation. The issue of pragmatic participation, however, clearly had a two-way dynamic. For the NGO sector (as will be discussed below) there was the attraction of resources and policy influence. For Arroyo, however, there was definite need to counter the still strong support for Estrada from the so-called D and E sectors of the population (SWS 2001). While it was clear that Estrada’s policies had little or marginal impacts on poverty, Estrada had effectively cultivated a “face” of being an outsider against the elite players of Philippine politics. Morales even continued as a key supporter of Estrada after the latter was deposed. The pro-Estrada People’s Movement Against Poverty and other NGOs continued to organize against Arroyo. The

high point was a third EDSA mass demonstration in May 2001 (Franco 2006; Reid 2001). These NGOs and POs continued to make valid objections to the Arroyo government's regressive policy measures, such as utility charges (Kaakbay 2006). Arroyo, just like Estrada, therefore needed an anti-poverty "face" for certain programs. Soliman and others effectively provided this.

In addition and as with Estrada, the very introduction and terms of entry of personnel into key positions was characterized by personal approaches and bargaining by Arroyo with select individuals. When Soliman was made secretary of the DSWD (between 2001 and 2005), her explicit rationale for accepting a post in the government is revealing:

She [Arroyo] appointed me without my knowledge, and it took me five days to really think about this and decide whether I wanted to be in government because I'd never been in government before, and much of the advice from my own civil society friends was go, join government because it will expand the services that we want and the reforms that we want to undertake. We've been talking about good governance; here's your chance to show what good governance is all about, and we owe it to the people to give it a chance. (Soliman 2006)

Soliman's statement reveals two quite telling factors about the nature of interaction that took place. There is already implicit evidence of the ways that civil-society incorporation was very much the product of networks of clientelism and bargaining. The precursor to Soliman being offered the position was her role as coordinator of the network that acted as a secretariat of the movement to oust Estrada from power. Certain "rewards" were distributed by Arroyo's dominant forces in the new government. Note that the civil-society sector did not demand places: they were offered by the new president. Soliman indicates that it became largely her decision—with, at best, tacit agreement of some of her close supporters in the civil-society sphere—to accept the post. One aspect, therefore, of the appointment was a reward for supporting the new government.

The issue of interaction of supporters with key individuals is notable. Both Soliman (2006) and Constantino-David (2001) emphasize that precursor to their acceptance of offers of positions was a process of informal consultation with families, friends, and close coworkers in the NGO movements. This has two main implications. First, one can only speculate about the motivations for these coworkers in encouraging

these individuals to take these posts. The ostensible rationale was that they offered an opportunity to take policy innovations learned from the NGO sphere into government. There were, however, possibly more controversial aspects, such as access to funds and resources. Second, it is notable that negotiations tended to occur informally. There was no evidence of the existence of mechanisms for facilitating participation within the government on the basis of distinct programs and policies.

It was not, however, only the relatively small layer of civil-society leaders who had joined the government that were entangled in these relationships. More controversial was the issue of the Poverty Eradication and Alleviation Certificate (PEACe) bonds (Reid 2005). In keeping with increasingly popular notions in debates surrounding governance and development in the Philippines and internationally, the PEACe bonds emerged early during the Arroyo government as an “innovative” form of “public-private” sector partnership. In keeping with this, central leaders of the CODE-NGO, such as Chairperson Marissa Camacho-Reyes and National Coordinator Danilo Songco, entered into negotiations with the Bureau of Treasury over the possibility that bonds otherwise sold on the market to fund government services could be auctioned, with proceeds flowing directly to CSOs who would tender competitively for amounts to be spent on various programs. The finally agreed scheme entailed securities-eligible dealer Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation purchasing PHP 35 billion worth of bonds from the government in October 2001. The dealer, in turn, sold the bonds to Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (which had underwritten the project), ensuring a return of PHP 1.8 billion (USD 32 million), which was donated for use to CODE-NGO-established foundation. Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation would subsequently be able to trade the bonds on the capital market for profit in the future, while the amount contributed to CODE-NGO was “an exercise of their corporate social responsibility.” CODE-NGO used the PHP 1.8 billion to establish a foundation to fund projects.

Controversy quickly emerged when the process of issuing the bonds culminated in October 2001. While perfunctory amounts of publicity had been made to promote the program among diverse sectors of CSOs, it was almost inevitable that those groups closest to bond initiators and designers (especially affiliates of CODE-NGO) would have certain advantages in the process of bidding for funds. Particular attention was placed on Reyes, being the sister of Department of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho.

In addition, Arroyo revived in 2001 a number of consultative bodies, such as the NAPC, to oversee the implementation of social reforms. Arroyo moved quickly to revive the NAPC upon assuming power in 2001. An advisory sectoral council was reestablished, with fourteen civil society and an equal number of associated line-agency personnel as members. There was a wide process of consultation involved in selecting the NAPC representatives, although it was clear that significant mobilization occurred to ensure that representatives be either sympathetic to or supportive of the Arroyo government. Estrada's appointees were gradually removed (Soliman 2006). These were crucial to the design and implementation of projects such as the six-year and USD 200 million KALAHI scheme and others.¹⁰ Most significantly perhaps, Arroyo gave considerable importance to being seen to *personally* lead and chair all meetings of the NAPC council. Arroyo took a strong interest in the design of anti-poverty measures and the issues of who was represented on the council (Macasaet 2006).

What occurred, however, was in actuality a process whereby leaders from the civil-society sector were absorbed into a standard scenario of sharing out resources and access to power in return for loyalty, which semiclientelism entails. While the entry of these individuals into the state was the product of what was in many ways substantive social and political struggle in 2001 against Estrada, it had not substantially altered the relations of the historical bloc and its hegemony over the state. On the contrary, Arroyo coming to power was in many ways a reaffirmation of certain traditional political clans' control of the legislative and executive processes. While the Arroyo bloc made certain claims around the need for social reform and good governance, this was arguably a case of the classic operation of Gramsci's consent and coercion model (Gramsci 1972, 266, 271). The hegemonic apparatus of the state was used to contain and control a potential source of opposition to the regime via the clientelist incorporation of civil-society leaders. There were limits, however, to how effective this manipulation could be over time.

Figures such as Soliman (2006) claim that they understood that there was dual character to Arroyo. On the one hand, there was the "traditional politician" (or *trapo* in Filipino), who was mostly interested in holding power. On the other, Arroyo at least explicitly talked about an agenda of good governance and social reform. In December 2002, Arroyo claimed that she was not going to run in the 2004 presidential poll and would instead focus on implementing reforms. Yet by August

2003, Arroyo reversed this decision when the opposition opted to support movie star Fernando Poe Jr.'s campaign. Fearful that another Estrada-type candidate would be elected, some civil-society organizations opted to support Arroyo's campaign (Macasaet 2006). What effectively ensued in 2004 and 2005 was a gradual process whereby the reformist agenda of the government became increasingly marginalized.

As with Estrada's government, deep contradictions and conflicts emerged over the government's agenda of fiscal reform and its commitment to poverty alleviation. Spending on the latter had remained relatively modest. Yet, a worsening fiscal crisis had led to calls to impose a highly regressive expanded-value added tax (E-VAT) by sections of the government and multilateral financial agencies (Fletcher 2005). Despite maintaining low expenditure, with disbursements actually falling in 2004, public debt had again begun to expand after 2000 (NEDA 2004, 2). Despite this, there were limited actions aimed at reducing endemic tax avoidance and the operation of syndicates within the tax office itself. It has been claimed that some actions were averted against the largest tax avoiders as they were major contributors to Arroyo's campaign (Soliman 2006).

The former NGO leaders in the cabinet did not originally break completely with the government and instead opted for calling for measures to link the increased revenues from the E-VAT to social expenditures to compensate for the inequitable impacts of a regressive tax. Yet these measures were hampered by changes in the structure of the government. In the early part of 2005, the cabinet was expanded from twenty to more than forty-three members, including lower-level directors. The cabinet itself was divided into three working groups: economy, poverty reduction, and peace and security. Arroyo appeared to become less accessible to the "reformist" elements. What effectively ensued was that the economics group began to campaign vigorously for the E-VAT. The reformers, mostly in the poverty reduction group, called for joint meetings and negotiations. These became absorbed in issues over the technical implications of different taxation levels and their impacts on revenue and capacity for debt reduction. The assumption of the economics group was that poverty reduction would somehow automatically flow from debt reduction. The poverty reduction groups disputed this and instead called for the new tax to be linked to direct social allocations (Soliman 2006). The debate, however, was never fully resolved, and the cabinet came to operate in a very fragmented manner.

Similar tensions emerged over issues of corruption allegations involving Arroyo. Across the latter part of 2004 and early 2005, Arroyo's husband became implicated in claims about his receipt of illegal gambling funds from the illegal "jueteng" syndicate. Given that allegations of Estrada's receipts of these funds had led to his removal from power in 2001 by a coalition headed by Arroyo, these claims were very damaging. Again the civil-society members, such as Soliman, had tended to give Arroyo the benefit of the doubt. While claiming to have "frequently raised these issues" it was said that Arroyo always replied with "where is the proof" (Soliman 2006). Again some rationale for avoiding conflict with the president was given. The opposition was represented as effectively wanting to restore a populist presidential regime and the forms of corruption that had characterized Estrada's term. Such justifications had even been used earlier during the 2004 election campaign for supporting Arroyo against opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. There were limits, though, on how far civil-society supporters would go.

However, the decisive issue that eventually led to the reformers' departure from the government was the emergence of decisive evidence of electoral fraud during the 2004 polls. Former National Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Samuel Ong emerged in May 2005 with a recording of a phone conversation that took place between Arroyo and Electoral Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano. Arroyo initially did not respond to claims about the recording. Important supporters from within the civil-society sector—in particular, CODENGO—outside of the cabinet moved to distance themselves from the government, establishing their own "truth commission" into the affair (Rivera 2005). Arroyo finally addressed the existence of the "Hello Garci" recording. The president presented a statement on June 27 apologizing for talking to an official so soon after the close of voting, yet denying interference with the vote.

It was at this point that any substantial explicit commitment to reform by the government largely disappeared. Instead, there was a majority position calling for an explicitly "national security"-based agenda, which effectively translated into ensuring the government's survival by any means. Arroyo had compounded the situation by claiming to her supporters that the tapes were fake, while she was preparing to admit publicly that they were genuine. Again, Soliman points out:

What broke the camel's back—so to speak—was on July 5th [2005]. We were having a cabinet meeting and she said, "Okay, the framework for governance now is national security. We will bring in the muscle and we will bring in the fear factor and we will increase the funds of DSWD so that the poor will be always loyal to us," and one of the cabinet members said: Yes, yes, yes. If they're paying the poor PHP200,000.00 to come up into the valleys, we will give them mobile phone cards and sacks of rice to buy their loyalty, and I said—I couldn't help myself—"Hey, wait a minute. Isn't that the right of the people to be served and it's our responsibility to serve, especially the poor?" And someone said, "Dinky, stop that. This is already political survival. We have to think in a different way." And in my mind I said, "Okay, good-bye. I'm not going to join you in thinking in a different way." I'd compromised too much. In fact, I think this is a little too late, and when I left they really gave it to me and have, up to now, made it a point to diminish my integrity, and it's the cultural value of loyalty that they keep chipping—that I have been disloyal to my best friend. (Soliman 2006)

Finally, seven cabinet members and three agency heads, including almost all of the civil-society sector reformers, resigned from the government on July 8. Eventually, the limits of the semiclientelist relations with the civil-society representatives were breached: it became clear that any pretense of implementing reforms was going to be thoroughly subordinated to using programs to buy support in regional areas. The government even responded to its critics with a personal language of "betrayal of friends." Arroyo has subsequently embarked on a process of political and constitutional reform aimed at entrenching the power of the congress and the political clans that predominate there (Consultative Commission, Government of the Philippines, 2005). Meanwhile, most of Arroyo's civil-society allies established their own extra-parliamentary opposition coalitions and even entered into discussions with rebel junior officers in the military (Black and White Movement 2005; Laban ng Masa 2005).

The NPAC subsequently more or less ceased to function after the emergence of the "Hello Garci" tape in June 2005 and the effective abandonment of support by the large part of the civil-society sector for Arroyo. Four civil-society representatives had resigned by April 2005, and none of them were replaced. This was largely immaterial, however, as the NAPC sector council ceased meeting at the same time and there has since been no communication or explanation from the organization's secretariat. All three nominated replacements so far for the vacant positions have been anti-Arroyo, and there has been no movement

aimed at accepting these potential candidates (Macasaet 2006). In keeping with other policy directions by the Arroyo government, most relief and social program spending is now being designed and implemented without NAPC input. A pattern is emerging of the cabinet and president's office making allocations to programs with the main aim of winning political support in the provincial areas.

Taken together, therefore, a cycle of processes occurred across both the Estrada and Arroyo governments that were strong expressions of semiclientelism. In both cases the regimes were based in and among the historic bloc with its entrenched practices of clientelism and bossism. These regimes, however, needed "faces" to be included in the regime to present a convincing image of serious reforms to tackle poverty. Personal approaches were made to select NGO and activist leaders to "cross over" to the state sphere. Select NGO co-workers tended to support these moves—if somewhat warily—perhaps assuming that resources may become available as a result. The contradictions of the regimes, given the actuality of their at best modest and declining commitment to reform, resulted in the eventual exit of most of these NGO leaders from the executive. The limits of neo-clientelism were reached and its capacity as a tool for generating spontaneous consent was breached. Sadly perhaps, the experience of "crossover" ultimately led to sense of being double-crossed by the historic bloc and state agencies.

TRANSITION, SEMICLIENTELISM, AND THE HISTORIC BLOC

What does the Philippine experience suggest about the broader implications of civil-society engagement and the politics of development? The paper commenced by noting the increasing emphases that have been placed on contemporary development policy of the supposed complementarity of civil-society engagement with measures of improving governance and poverty alleviation. The Philippines presents an interesting case to investigate some of the problematic assumptions of such discourse from the standpoint of social formation that exhibits contradictory combination of entrenched features of clientelist political life and considerable social-movement activism. The paper has used the case study of how select left-of-center NGOs and POs and leaders from this sector "crossed over" to take up positions in the state during two purportedly reforming government regimes. According to neo-Tocquevillean assumptions, such engagement would have had the

effect of increasing the development capacity of the state. In both cases, the “crossover” was eventually abandoned.

Five main points can be concluded from the above analysis. First, the limitations of the neo-Tocquevillean approach to civil society are clearly apparent in the Philippines. The Putnam-inspired and even further depoliticized approach of most mainstream development organizations posits a simplistic relationship between power, the state, and civil society. Considerable literature disputes the necessary conflation between civil-society vibrancy, between governance and development. Where clientelism is concerned, the neo-Tocquevillean argument tends to reproduce the assumptions of classic modernization-theory approaches. These posit a simple evolution away from clientelism as development proceeds. In contemporary development policy, this posits a simplified model of dual transition whereby economic liberalization is accompanied—with the right forms of institutional reform—by democratization and improved performance of the state. Alternatively both older and more recent revisionist approaches have argued for an acceptance of clientelism as part of development.

Clientelism, however, is a much more durable historical phenomenon. To be sure, substantive changes have occurred in many developing society as agrarian transformation, industrialization, and urbanizations have advanced. Subaltern political actors in the form of social movements establish political spaces outside of and make claims upon the state for social and political reform. Older forms of overt authoritarianism and violence give way to semiclientelism whereby more subtle measures of co-optation emerge. These especially involve incorporation of social-movement leaders.

Second, the Gramscian approach employed in the paper is strongly applicable to the Philippines, which has long demonstrated trends of clientelism and bossism in social and political processes. The historic bloc utilized such mechanisms as a means of consolidating hegemony and spontaneous consent among subaltern populations. The progressive development NGOs and POs that are the focus of this paper occupy a contradictory space in these relationships. Civil society has both incorporative and counterhegemonic dimensions. Oppositional forces outside of the historic bloc can emerge within this sphere. The issue that confronts these actors is the choice between absorption into the hegemonic relations via the acceptance of transition-model of democratization and development. Alternatively, there is the recognition that NGOs and POs are better served by retaining a focus on

dismantling the political and social structural and historical barriers that they confront. The challenge for the historic bloc is to find ways of extending its hegemonic control of these institutions and actors. The transition discourse provides a subtle and effective means of co-optation of these forces.

Third, there is considerable evidence that trend of such co-optation developed in the Philippines, particularly after redemocratization and EDSA 1 in 1986. In many ways, the broader alterations in Philippine politics and society were accompanied by a shift away from overt forms of clientelism toward semiclientelism. A trend emerged in NGO and PO activism toward a project-based form of organizing. A focus on political organizing and confrontation gave way to issues of livelihood and advocacy and cooperation with state agencies. This did not mean, however, that issues of wider political reform did not remain important. On the contrary, various NGO and PO leaders began to conceptualize achieving substantive political and social reform through alliances with elite political actors or “clans.” Yet the form and basis of these alliances remained ambiguous. It is not difficult to conceive here that a form of highly personalized appeal was perhaps at play. The gradual adoption of poverty alleviation and governance discourse by actors within the historic bloc provided the appearance of some interest in substantive change.

Fourth, the process of alliance formation with elite political actors ultimately led to two cycles of engagement and eventual disillusionment. Both the Estrada and Arroyo administrations encouraged a process of “crossover” of select NGO personnel into the state executive. The eventual reform accomplishments were either modest or entirely a failure. In both cases, the following cycle emerged:

1. Regimes required that a “face” be established at the head of various agencies concerned with service delivery, poverty reduction, and social reform. The broader policy programs of each government were ambiguous at best and largely remained committed to strongly neoliberal strategy of development and economic growth. There was, in other words, a focus on appearances of reform sincerity rather than substance.
2. Elite political actors—often the presidents themselves—made personal offers of positions to key activists. These had often but not always played some role in their path

to power. In keeping with the clientelist and semiclientelist model, there were strong notions of reciprocity and bargaining in negotiations over power sharing.

3. There is not much evidence of broader discussion and agreement on the basis for and form of entry into the government. It appears to have been largely ad hoc decision making, with additional incentive that some NGOs and POs would have enhanced access to policy making and resources. On the “demand” side, therefore, of the semiclientelist process, NGOs themselves hoped to gain in terms of resources and access.
4. Ultimately, the crossover of personnel led to disillusion and failure. The Estrada regime collapsed under the weight of the contradictions of its engagement in corrupt activities. Arroyo’s government—ostensibly claiming to be in favor of political reform—became similarly embroiled in controversy. The exit of the NGO personnel did, however, help to undermine the legitimacy of both regimes.

The notion of crossover, therefore, ultimately realized few enduring changes. What occurred was a hegemonic process that helped generate consent to the power of two elite political regimes. Civil society tended to exhibit once again the features of acting as an additional support mechanism for the state and the political elite (Hedman 2006). However, there were limits to this.

Fifth and finally, the development NGOs and POs that engaged in the semiclientelist process of crossover generally reverted to a more oppositional stance. The cycle outlined above demonstrates the important contradictions in Philippine political culture. On the one hand, there are substantive levels of NGO and PO activism. On the other, there is strongly entrenched political elite. It was perhaps a reflection of this contradiction and the latter’s vulnerability that elite political actors were compelled to use semiclientelist processes to contain the growth of oppositional culture outside of the historic bloc. NGOs and POs would perhaps be better served by conceptualizing themselves as part of an oppositional bloc of forces competing for state power, rather than seeking ultimately doomed coalitions of the Estrada and Arroyo type. Above all, it requires accepting a political

analysis that goes beyond the model of dual political and economic transition—that almost assumes an automatic conditioning role for the associational sphere on state institutions—and recognizes that civil society overwhelmingly tends to be absorbed by and constituted on the basis of clientelist and semiclientelist relations. An outlook founded on the basis of a more structural and historical analysis of social relations entails that much clearer criteria be established for considering when entry into and support for state programs are justified.✿

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NOTES

1. See chapter 5 in Tocqueville (1988, 61-98). It provides the main description of what he regards as the central role of decentralization in American society.
2. J. D. Wolfensohn (1999) gives considerable emphasis on civil society as a partner in development action. The World Bank (2006) provides a more recent summation of interaction.
3. Rivera (2005) somewhat problematically includes the Makati Business Club and the Philippine Bankers Association in civil society. Most neo-Tocquevilleans regard business/capital as generally outside of civil society, hence the concept of the “third sector” outside of private enterprise and the state (see Ashman 2001).
4. Kerkvliet (1995) makes the rather obvious point that not all power relationships in the Philippines can be explained by clientelism. Yet much of what he describes of alliance building and status contestation—in the sphere of “everyday politics”—can be interpreted as expressions of clientelism and bossism and how these are actively and passively contested.
5. Indeed by 2000 it was estimated that more than ten thousand articles have already been written about Gramsci.
6. Post-Althusserians, however, tried to resolve this problem with a problematic and eclectic engagement with post-structuralism. See Gibson-Graham (1996).
7. Morton (2007) gives particular emphasis on the (still fashionable) Mexican Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), a model of transnational anti-systemic movement. Interestingly enough, the EZLN constantly refers to civil society as an oppositional force.
8. Epifanio delos Santos Avenue, site of the 1986 democratic uprising and the subsequent revolts against Estrada and Arroyo in 2001.
9. These are not the only examples, of course, as Constantino-David (2001, 215) notes. Estrada made appointments to positions that sometimes even conflicted

- with executive department heads. Ed de la Torre (noted above) became head of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Franco 2006, 118).
10. The full name is Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Link Arms Against poverty)-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services: Kapangyarihan at Kaunlaran sa Barangay (Community-Driven Development in the Village). It is the “flagship” poverty alleviation project of the Arroyo government, half-funded by the World Bank (see Reid [2005] and DSWD [n.d.]).

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