A Habermasian Critique of Student Representation in the University of the Philippines

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KEYWORDS

Araling Pilipino   indihenisasyon

dayalektikal na karunungan   pagtatalaban

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This research is a manifestation and a statement on the unexamined and subpar state of student politics in the University of the Philippines Diliman (UP Diliman). Student politics, overhauled by student political parties, belongs in the Habermasian concept of the System. Student political parties are composed of students and alliance student organizations, which subscribe to a specific set of principles and ideologies when concerning nationalism, tackling social ills, and student governance. This paper explains how the conspicuous, unregulated politicking subverts student democracy—the core foundation of the student council as an institution.

The main argument of this paper is that the current system of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (CSSP) Student Council, or CSSPSC, struggles to adhere to genuine democratic principles through the failure of communicative action. To substantiate the main argument, Jürgen Habermas' concept of the Colonization of the Lifeworld and the Theory of Communicative Action need to be appropriated to the context of the CSSPSC. The state of student-led institutions needs to be examined and reexamined as it facilitates the insights and

concerns from students themselves. Moreover, upholding democratic freedom to protect the students' collective interests in this political climate also preserves their autonomy. If these institutions fail to do so, then it is time to reconceive the notion of student leadership and representation to that which enables uncorrupted participation.

Given my main argument, this paper will be grounded on the following objectives:

i. To substantiate the need for communicative action in student representation;

ii. To illustrate the subsystem of politics in the student council colonizing the lifeworld during the election of officers, in-council deliberations, and the council composition; and,

iii. To propose an alternative structure that encourages communicative action and regulates the Habermasian concept of "colonization by the system."

These objectives will be the backbone of each section in this paper. In the first section, the CSSPSC and its nature of student representation shall be undertaken. The second section will examine three political aspects of the student council system: the elections, methods of the student council in establishing rapport with students, and council composition to examine the way the institution functions as a political system permeating the lifeworld of the student body. Lastly, this research will suggest how student leaders can be representatives of students' interests following the ideal speech setting for communicative action.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will examine the CSSPSC in UP Diliman in terms of its adherence to the Habermasian communicative action. In particular, the batch of officers and the

deliberative mechanisms from 2018 to 2022 shall be considered in the analysis. This timeframe had the most available documentation online by the CSSP Student Press, SINAG; CSSP Office of Student Affairs (CSSP-OSA); and the CSSPSC itself. Since politics is crucial in evaluating the presence of communicative action, the study acknowledges that the CSSPSC officers belong to two different political parties. In CSSP, these political parties exist to form a network of organizations and students, and each party abides by an ideology that is shown through the party's projects. The critique shall recognize the involvement of two CSSP political parties during the timeframe set: SALiGAN sa CSSP and BUKLOD CSSP. By acknowledging the influence of these political parties on the CSSPSC, the competition during the CSSPSC elections season and the discussions during the council assemblies shall be highlighted.

METHODOLOGY

Critique of the student representation was objectively approached from the perspective of a CSSPSC constituent. Albeit the author was directly involved with the CSSPSC for two academic years, objective distancing was accomplished. Furthermore, the author did not and does not belong to any of the political parties. The author obtained information from the official and publicly accessible Facebook pages of the institutions relevant to the study, archival data, such as the minutes of the General Assemblies, and recorded media of the events. At the time of writing, access to physical copies of documentations, if available, was limited due to health restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the minutes of the meetings were provided by the CSSPSC.

The CSSPSC and Student Representation

Students in UP Diliman are welcomed with the notion that their university is the microcosm of the Philippines society.[1] For the purposes of this thesis, this parallelism draws from the

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[1] Small Enterprises Research and Development Foundation. "UP President, UP Diliman Chancellor Address SERDEF General Assembly – Small Enterprises Research and Development Foundation."

population's cultural and social diversity, as well as the political similarities of the university and nation in terms of elected government structure. This microcosmic nature is evident in the student political arena. Students are primarily represented in administrative matters through elected student leaders. The university and college student councils employ a structure akin to the national government. The general student council consists of the standard bearers (chairperson, vice chairperson, and representative to the University Student Council), who act as the executive arm of the council; the councilors who are focused on managing specific socio-academic areas (i.e., student's rights and welfare), functioning like the Presidential cabinet; and the representatives from each department working under councilor-led committees that function akin to district representatives in Congress. All these considered, analyzing the capability of the student council system to practice democracy matters. In this case, practicing democracy implies having authentic student representation, beginning from the electoral process until the elected officials start their terms.

In the case of UP Diliman, the organized body is the student council. In the interest of providing examples appropriated to Habermasian concepts, this paper uses CSSPSC as the case study. According to the recent CSSPSC constitution, the CSSPSC has the power to "[r]epresent the CSSP studentry in all major policy-making bodies of the College when so provided by laws, rules and regulations of the CSSP Administration…" (College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution," 4). With this, the CSSPSC will be taken as the embodiment of student representation in the college. Moreover, the council is composed of elected student leaders who undergo an electoral process organized by the outgoing batch of student council and the CSSP-OSA. In Habermas' terms, the CSSPSC is a subsystem. While it does not primarily involve economics, the other Habermasian subsystem, it is a form of government to which power

and influence are attached and reproduced. Moreover, it involves numerous bureaucratic processes, beginning from the candidates' electoral process until the time that elected candidates formally enter office. Having this kind of subsystem permits a more efficient way to reach a "deep consensus;" communicative action is "relaxed" when strategic action takes place (Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas.") Instead of having the CSSP community meet and coordinate administrative affairs, or formulate projects concerning CSSP students, the CSSPSC serves as the student's mouthpiece and spearheads initiatives that are in their interest. The political institution of the student council is built on the strategic actions that aim to, supposedly, sustain the lifeworld, which provides the context and tools, thereby enabling communicative action.

Politics' Systemic Integration

The system of student politics integrates itself into the lifeworld and is continually being strengthened by the institution of the student council. Since there is an established need for an official, administration-recognized student representation, having the structure of student council is definite and accepted as it is. Restructuring is never considered and is non-negotiable. Even though it may leave its purpose unfulfilled, the existence of the structure remains unquestioned. In Jendrik Hilgerloh Nuske's lecture[2], he gave two manifestations of systemic integration:

Reputation. An individual's perception of a speaker's status can greatly affect how they interact with the speaker. When one has a good reputation, they are not prone to being questioned and are respected; whereas, if one has otherwise, they are more predisposed to scrutiny. A person's reputation is not subject to discussion or a consensus simply because it is a preconceived notion of a person to another person because of a circumstantial bias. This bias, a by-product of how one performs in a systemic integration, comes

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[2] Hilgerloh-Nuske, "IAPSS Political Theory SRC Webinar," September 11, 2020.

from a certain occurrence that allows the perceiving individuals to form an idea about that occurrence. Yet, this should not be taken lightly as it could affect a person's disposition. A case in point would be the issue arising from Candidate X's record of negligence. In this example, Candidate X's reputation might affect their standing in the race for councilor, given that their reputation comes from their experiences as a student in the university.

This issue is documented in the Facebook page of Pasabog, a digital platform organized by the UP Political Society where student voters can address questions to the candidates for the CSSPSC elections. One post alleges that Candidate X misplaced an expensive device, emphasizing their lack of accountability.[3] Before this, Candidate X can be considered to possess a good reputation, founded on her involvement and contributions with the CSSP FST Council. This issue started conversations amongst student voters, and Candidate X failed to attain the required number of votes and eventually did not make the cut. On the other hand, candidates in Candidate X's slate who ran for the same position won the seats. In this example, the issue brought a negative perception of Candidate X, thereby affecting their reputation and consequently their status in the political race.

This instance demonstrates that manifestations of systemic integration in the Habermasian concept of the System do not employ verbal communication; hence, the lack of discourse about the issue. Strategic action was manifested as the voters used this issue to mark their criteria in voting for a candidate. Candidate X's reputation was not discussed further, but the fact remained and spoke for itself.

Possessing Political Authority. Political authority is tied with political power, which then entails protection and connection, depending on how people perceive authority. Nonetheless, having authority or lack of it can potentially lead to a divide. Candidates who hold executive positions in student organization are deemed political authorities. This situation entails a certain perception that they might be capable of holding office in the CSSPSC because they are politically powerful enough to do so in their respective affiliations. The notion of possessing political authority may influence the voter's insight on candidates.

The Elections and the Rationalization of the System

Rationalization is the justification of the system's purpose and relevance to society. The CSSP student body, due to its need for student representation, depends on the existence of CSSPSC. It could be argued that the society focuses on strategic action for the sake of the efficiency of the process, resulting to inherent advantages of some members in society (e.g., those who belong in political dynasties possess long-term political power because they are expected to continue their projects). However, as seen in ongoing civil wars and discriminatory policies in modern societies, the rationalization of the system "only results to rise of standard of living but lives are not enriched" (Gaspar, "Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action," 408.) This entails that modernization has seeped into traditional customs and values and improved certain aspects of life, but caused other problems to emerge. Nevertheless, society cannot remove the system altogether because of its material contributions to the lifeworld.

Debate and the Lack of Cooperative Behavior

One of the events annually organized by the CSSP-OSA as part of the elections period is the Miting de Avance.[4] It is an avenue where the traditional political antics of mudslinging and gatekeeping ensue. During Miting de Avance, political aspirants exchange norm-oriented speech acts that dictate how specific situations should go and what is right for society. For example, a motion in the debate may involve an issue, the perceived root of the problem,

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[3] Pasabog: The CSSP Elections Debate, "Pasabog: The CSSP Elections Debate - Posts | Facebook," April 8, 2019. CSSP Office of the Student Affairs, "CSSP Miting de Avance."

[4] CSSP Office of the Student Affairs, "CSSP Miting de Avance."

and its repercussions to the student body as a whole. The candidate's stance and their mode of expressing it counts as a norm-oriented action. Norm-oriented actions are acts that are informed by norms and conventions and are generally acceptable. In fact, norm-oriented actions are also mediated by practical discourses.[5] Practical discourses are done for the sake of efficiency and immediate solution to the problem, often disregarding the depth of understanding for each speech actor. In one segment, students can openly ask questions to candidate/s of their choice and have a minute to respond.[6] In turn, the asker has the option to ask a follow-up question to clarify and extend the discussion. This format does not allow the candidates and the student body to engage meaningfully, given the time constraints and the limit to the number of questions. Moreso, the space is open for misleading questions or answers that may or may not further clarify the candidates' principles and platforms. These systematic bureaucratic limitations compromise the mutual understanding of the speech actors by only hearing what was heavily influenced by rhetoric. Thus, not only are candidates under time pressure to speak, they are prone to declare whatever they think will sway the audience in their favor. Furthermore, the "one question, one answer" method does not ascertain the candidates' consistent actions towards their beliefs and their sense of accountability. In Pasabog's CSSP Elections Debate 2021, one of the questions was about the concrete steps taken by each party regarding the red-tagging of CSSP students. With an issue as pressing as this, the incumbent student council is expected to respond to the allegations and threats urgently and proactively. During the interpellation, a candidate from Political Party Y asked the opposition "what concrete steps did the current Political Party X-led SC and Political Party X do to address these and do you think these actions taken were sufficient and effective…"[7] A student-leader, who was red-tagged and threatened by the police, commented on the livestream's post and contradicted the claim, saying that the incumbent party-led SC did not reach out to them. Two arguments can be drawn from this example: 1) immediate verification of the speaker's claims does not occur in a political event where strategic action instead of communicative action is practiced, and 2) the subsystem of politics allows its manifestation, the party system, to create an environment conducive to the obstruction of communicative action via affiliation to reputation. Hence, it can be established that the affiliated candidates are the targets of mudslinging during onsite or online fora. Mudslinging happens when one party throws or supports unwarranted claims and insults to another party. One example[8] above demonstrates mudslinging when the candidate from Political Party X redirected the debate into them claiming about Political Party Y's ostracization ploy even though it was unfounded. This tactic was done to damage the reputation of the accused political party. Instead of asking meaningful questions directly concerning student affairs, the candidate resorted to mudslinging, which mudslinging undermined the cooperative behavior needed in communicative action. There is no reason to believe that the insulting speaker is aiming for mutual understanding and "consensus of any kind".[9]

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[5] Hilgerloh-Nuske, "IAPSS Political Theory SRC Webinar," September 11, 2020.

[6] CSSP Office of the Student Affairs, "CSSP Miting de Avance."[6] Brunkhorst, Kreide, and Lafont, The Habermas Handbook: New Directions in Critical Theory, 502.

[7] PASABOG: The CSSP Elections Debate, "PASABOG: The CSSP Elections Debate 2021," l. 56:03-58:07.

[8] A candidate for the chairperson position under Political Party X claimed that a candidate from Political Party Y tends to "ostracize students who do not subscribe from [their] political ideologies" (PASABOG: The CSSP Elections Debate, 2021, l. 2:22:53-2:23:04). The supporters of the opposing parties seem to have taken offense to this claim resulting in a comment thread. Incumbent SC officer under Political Party X manifested that the comment section revealed the ostracization described by the chairperson candidate. A Facebook user passively responded, "ay weh?", while another supporter of Political Party Y defended the party by claiming that the commenters had justifications for their comments. Moreover, the said supporter insisted that the Political Party Y-affiliated students did not mean to ostracize just because they possessed a different ideology; in reality, it was the opposite party who judged their ideology.

[9] Brunkhorst, Kreide, and Lafont, The Habermas Handbook: New Directions in Critical Theory, 502.

Whenever a candidate does not abide by an ideology (of a political party), supporters of a certain ideology/party react unnecessarily negatively to a candidate's stance. There is a lack of discourse and an open mind when it comes to these debates or fast talks. Cooperative behavior is needed to align with the defined ideal structure of a student representative that fairly represents the students. Cooperative behavior requires synergy between the speech actors in determining which actions to take towards mutually determined and valuable goals.[10]

General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is a weekly assembly of the CSSPSC for council members to forward a subject matter for voting. Before the votation, presenting arguments or "manifestations" take place. When this argumentation continues long enough to reach the speech actors' goal of mutual understanding, and this act of trying to attain a rational agreement is called "discourse."[11] The GA is considered a political deliberation because of the occurrences of debate, discussion, and voting. The open-door nature of the meeting is an extension of the democratic space to the students who elected the council. To maintain order, the GA follows a set of agreed-upon actions that uphold etiquette and meeting flow. However, this approach of communication during the GA poses limitations, especially for those who are non-members of the CSSPSC.[12] In one GA, SINAG staffers requested to be included in the deliberations, but because the press were not elected council members, they had no voting nor direct speaking power during the GA. According to the CSSPSC House Rules,[13] special attendees are considered "observers".

The GA 14 Narratives minutes showed they had difficulty adapting to the conduct of the GA. The minutes stated: "Due to complications with the observers' practice of Robert's Rules..."[14] The special attendees were only acknowledged through their department representatives in the council and were only allowed to deliver a privilege speech. Thereafter, the department representative, in their own words, told the body what the observer said. Through this method, the essence and intensity of the observer's words were prone to be misconstrued, thereby risking a failure of communicative action. Furthermore, the set-up did not satisfy the Habermasian conditions of an ideal speech setting. The speakers (i.e., the observers) were not free to deliver their piece consistently and risked misinterpretation. If the rules are to be modified after all, they should be modified towards the promotion of free discourse. Rationalizing having student authority figures that can decide on CSSP Student Body's stance on certain issues can undermine the power of individual students who do not have such authority. Therefore, formalization limits the speaker and corrupts the ideal speech setting in the GA, especially involving non-CSSPSC attendees.

Within the council, validity claims are said and tested every time during the GA. For a successful communication, the three (3) universal validity claims of "truth, rightness, and sincerity" of the interlocutor is accepted by the hearer.[15] These validity claims are proven during discourses. Voting ensues to decide on a motion raised. A decision is considered to be "an act of the council."[16] The example mentioned above entails an absence of clarity on the part of the speaker, the observer, due to the other party's intervention as a mediator.

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[10] Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas."

[11] Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society.[13] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution," 10.

[12] Giana Larrauri, "Konsensiya Ng Bayan:Frail Cognizance on CRSRS."

[13] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP House Rules 2021A."

[14] CSSP Student Council Secretary-General, "GA 14 Narratives."

[15] Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas," 7.

[16] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution," 10.

Deliberations and Validity Claims

Having claims that are capable of being validated and are thereafter validated is important for the involved speakers in a speech act. This gives each other assurance that mutual understanding will be reached and that both sides are cooperating in the pursuit of understanding.

Each officer during the GA receives one vote each. The council settles on a decision by a majority vote during a regular, special, or an emergency.[17] According to the CSSPSC Constitution, this decision is considered to be "an act of the council" 10.. Clarity is an essential criterion to acknowledge a validity claim, which precedes rational action.

Regarding the attempt to achieve the three universal validity claims of "truth, rightness, and sincerity," when the hearer does not agree with the truth and rightness claims of the speaker, argumentation, which is taken as discourse in Habermasian terms, ensues. It is through discourse that the truth validity claim—the empirical statements that are made by the speaker—and the rightness validity claims based on normative social relations, can be validated (Brunkhorst, Kreide, and Lafont, The Habermas Handbook: New Directions in Critical Theory, 300.) Thus, the audience, with their knowledge on the subject and own insight, can confirm through different means what the speaker is saying. If the hearer decides the speech act is truthful and right, then the hearer is justified in partly accepting the speech act. However, claims about sincerity cannot be validated by discourse. The other listener just needs to accept the speaker as they are, without being coerced or subjected to opportunity or power imbalance, to attain a redemption of sincerity. With these concepts, validity claims can be said to involve interpersonal relations and are not restricted to the logical and empirical aspects of the conversation.

Tyranny of the Majority

According to the House Rules "CSSP House Rules 2021A," to pass a motion or settle an issue, a simple majority vote is needed. The practice of communicative action allows every party involved to reach a mutual understanding unanimously. The notion of having a majority vote as the deciding factor in settling discourses is contrary to communicative action. The votes are symbols generated in the subsystem of politics to generalize the attempts to communicative action by the conversations. Plutocracy undermines the individual's speech acts because it simplifies the collective preferences into one that may not be unanimously agreed upon; hence, there is no understanding, only a vague, consensus. Because of the dominance of this symbol and the instrumental nature of passing a motion and declaring an act of the council, it can be stated that what is observed in the council is strategic action rather than communicative action. The strategic action allows the majority to dictate what is, thus overshadowing the minority. The act of voting does not permit speech acts to be understood. A speech act is said to be understood when all the context and rationale given by the speaker are acknowledged as valid and when the hearer accepts this rationale, thus, requiring "social cooperation" (Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas") There is a threat of impartiality when most of the elected candidates belong in the same political affiliation. These affiliated elected officers tend to gravitate towards fulfilling their parties' interests, in accordance with their parties' principles and ideologies. This tendency distorts the process of consensus-making during assemblies. Without the leading influence of the political parties and the implications to the party that proceed from acting based on the parties' interests, Habermas' vision of practicing communicative action and achieving mutual understanding

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[17] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution."

can be realized. When the system does not colonize the lifeworld and affect even the deliberations within the council, a consensus through reasonable compromise can be attained.

Due to the nature of the positions, candidates are expected to manifest the three basic validity claims. Sometimes, this justifiability is clouded by the officer's political leaning. Indeed, the officer-elect cannot be separated from their political party. Even this was observed by the student body, as reflected in an anonymized post from a voter. Pasabog, aside from the annual elections debate, also conducted an online "freedom wall" on Facebook, where students asked relevant questions to the candidates. Questions were submitted via an online form and were filtered for relevance. An entry submitted on their Facebook page interrogated an independent candidate that ran with a political party-dominated elections. The inquirer asked, "How will you find your voice in a [Political Party X]-dominated council? Considering that you are a freshie, how can you assert your position and voice out the concerns of your constituents..."[18] Observe the words "find your voice," "assert," and the use of the political party's name. This question indicated an assumption of the inevitable attachment of the incumbent officers to their party. The attachment extended to the elected officer's plans for the committee and political strategy within the council. Another question read, "How will you forward the concerns of your constituents when it goes against the principles/stand of your councilmates?"[19] This last question, together with the aforementioned, carried an understanding that whoever achieved the most seats in the council also received the most votes (assuming they were loyal to their political party) during political deliberations once they were seated. This "dominant party as council" branding of the student council also risked overshadowing the non-dominant party members' participation.

This branding was also shown by the kind of policies the council proposed. Even the public noticed this trend, as seen on Twitter, where one user jokingly asked who else would propose a certain amendment to the General Assembly of Student Councils (GASC) when the former dominant party is not dominant anymore.[20] Since during the GA, the majority vote wins and when the majority consists of political party-loyal council members, it can be assumed that the winning vote reflects that of the dominant political party's stand.

The Composition of Student Council

The student council officers can be categorized into four: standard bearers, councilors, department representatives of all the CSSP departments, and the representative/s from the CSSP Volunteer Corps (CSSPVC). The officers per category are voted into the position by a determined range of the student population. A larger voter population means a more influential candidate within the council. This is due to the exclusivity of roles that the "higher positions" will eventually handle when elected, and these roles entail the scope of their jurisdiction and power. The hierarchy makes tipping the scale towards authority and majority.

The Chairperson heads the Executive Coordinating Council (ECC), which is the "highest executive and implementing arm of the CSSPSC" and the "highest policy-making body when the GA is not in session" (College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, 2021a, 8.) Hence, it is possible for information to be exclusively shared within the ECC. The councilors serve as chairpersons of the standing committees of the council. When the candidates for councilors run during the elections, they immediately fit themselves to the committee of their preference. For example, Candidate X publicly introduced themself as having the ideal attributes of an Education, Training, and Popular Struggles Committee Chairperson when campaigning,[21]

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[18] The CSSP Elections Debate, "Pasabog: The CSSP Elections Debate - Posts | Facebook," 2019.

[19] Pasabog: The CSSP Elections Debate 2019).

[20] Pete #LeniKiko2022, "May asawa't anak na yung councilmates ko sa CSSPSC push pa din sa CRSRS amendments. Wala na bang ibang strategy? Who's dogmatic? #GASC2016."

albeit there was no provision in the CSSPSC constitution that required this.[22] The act of assuming a certain position within the council during the elections promotes intolerance and competition. When the candidates from opposing parties vying for the same seat win the elections, unnecessary tension might arise. If more candidates from Political Party X win, Candidate X might get the seat. The candidates for each committee chairperson are at the mercy of the voting ruling party. In one instance, Councilor Z from Political Party X did not win the seat they were vying for.[23] As deliberations progressed, a motion was raised to allow Councilor Z to have a co-headship in another committee. Tension began when the body seemingly agreed with the motion but another councilor from Political Party Y disagreed.[24] The ECC, as mentioned in the earlier section, amasses an exclusive power to implement council-binding decisions. Councilor Z expressed, "...*agree din ba sa co-headship pero 'yung point lang ba ay 'wag ako maka-upo sa ECC meeting?*"[25] Repercussions arise from not being on the "winning side of things." Nonetheless, no evident objections come from the public when candidates assume what their roles would be in the council, however imposing that act may be. It may be that the voting population is unaware of what takes place during chairpersonship delegations. With this, the general student body's political participation begins and ends with the elections. What goes on after is left as an afterthought and council officers benefit from it.

The other vital part of the council is the group of the department representatives, who coordinate with their department faculty, students, and organizations in crafting and implementing projects catering to their needs. Traditionally, department representatives also spearhead their department's core groups. In CSSP, these departmental core groups are composed of volunteer students who act as the implementing arm of the department representative's plans and projects. The department representatives concern themselves with matters relevant to the students' welfare. In this sense, they experience firsthand the on-ground situation of the CSSP as a college. The department representatives are mandated to be aware of the issues facing their department and the capacities of their constituents for growth and improvement. Here, the successful practice of communicative action spells the difference between having responsive projects and having projects that are implemented just for the sake of achieving something. The department representatives are free to determine their conditions for speech setting because the department is within their jurisdiction and outside of the CSSPSC. Hence, when "in the department," the department representatives can opt to be untouched by the system of politics surrounding the council. In this case, the department representatives, even those linked to political parties, possess the choice to belong in a lifeworld fully uncolonized by the system. While belonging in the student lifeworld of the CSSP community, they also belong to their department's lifeworld. Thus, they understand and relate to concepts, ideas, and norms exclusive to their department that cannot be comprehended by the council members outside their department. This unique position enables the department representatives to control or mitigate the semblance of the systems, i.e., subsystem of politics borne from the student council politicking within their department. Aside from their immediate and thorough involvement with their department, they concern themselves with matters relevant to the whole college by being members of the CSSPSC's standing committees. The CSSPSC Constitution only provides that members of each standing committee are recruited by the committee chairpersons.[26] The department representatives initially have no constitutional

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[21] Pasabog, The CSSP Elections Debate.

[22] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution."

[23] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "SC2021 Transcript GA 01."

[24] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council.

[25] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, 50.

[26] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution."

obligation to become a member of standing committees. They are exposed to the lifeworld of both their departments and the college. Still, this position is considered less powerful and influential within the council, as evidenced by the composition of the ECC, which can basically decide for the council. This hierarchy can disrupt communicative action, and speech acts may instead turn to strategic action. Council members that are motivated by political agenda and leveraged (or disadvantaged by their position in the council), will use communication styles and communication modes that will allow them to achieve what they want. This kind of thinking disregards the goal of consensus building and functioning in accordance with mutual understanding. In Habermasian standards, the structure of the council, infiltrated by the system of student politics, hampers communicative action, thereby also deterring the chance of student representation within the council, and similarly, outside their departments.

Politics, the Driver of Colonization

Given all the examples mentioned in this chapter, it can be concluded that the CSSPSC employs strategic action rather than communicative action in their communicative undertakings, particularly during elections debates and the GA.

In Habermas' Democratic Theory, politics is identified as an avenue for collaborative deliberation for the members of the society.[27] However, while the discourse engaged in this kind of political arena upholds communicative action, the same cannot be said with the mechanisms influencing the actors involved in student council. This politicization lead some students to be apathetic about student politics, as there is a lack of willing student leaders to join in leading the student body, drawing from the numerous posts about the extension of deadlines and call for applications of the

CSSP-OSA. For instance, in the 2019 CSSP elections, most of the posts were only vied for by one candidate, except for the position of councilor, wherein 6 seats were allocated.[28] The CSSP is the third most populated college in UP Diliman, yet candidates are few. On the average, only two students from opposing parties, vie for each seat.[29] These parties nominate or encourage their members to strategically run for student council positions. This major method of candidate selection poses exclusivity amongst the students. Those who actively engage in student politics are only the party members and their affiliates, the candidates themselves, and the student press. On the other hand, there are independent candidates, or those who do not affiliate themselves under a certain party. Running under a political party implies having security in terms of social support in campaigning. Thus, to an extent, students are seen as a vote count. Whether intended by the candidates or not, because the students vote, and voting is a non-linguistic medium for communication, the student voters are treated as commodities. Commodifying interpersonal connections is a consequence of having an institutionalized mechanism, which produces an agreement without having to communicate. This is brought about by the subsystem of politics.

Moreover, the candidates themselves may also be commodified. More winning candidates means a more powerful party inside the council's chambers. This perception of possessing power in numbers is accepted by the political parties and the public. Students tend to affiliate a certain set of elected student council officers to whichever political party has the majority number. This type of association occurs in feedbacks with regard to council-organized initiatives. Automatic association prevents further dialogue because the association itself speaks for the trait the party supposedly possesses. Moreover, reputation as a manifestation of politics as a subsystem

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[27] Olson, "Deliberative Democracy."

[28] CSSP Office of Student Affairs, "CSSP Office of Student Affairs - [BUMOTO KAPP 2019] Here Is the Final Official List of Candidates for the CSSP Student Council Election 2019. | Facebook."

[29] CSSP Office of the Student Affairs, "CSSP CONNECT | CSSP Student Council Election 2021 | Facebook."

is exhibited. The appeal of one's reputation forms an association to certain qualities, and from this association arises the absence of communicative action.

Political power drives the speech acts amongst the CSSPSC to solely be a means to an end. The individual belonging under a party is commodified, and every elected candidate is a unit of power for the political machinery within the council. Invoking the implication of Gaspar's explanation of the means-end principle, "Everything can be seen as instruments that can be manipulated, especially in terms of earning a profit" (Gaspar, "Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action," 409.) For every aspirant of the political parties who get elected and earn a spot in the council, one voting individual exists for the interest of the political party. Although it can be said that the aspirants are into public service, the fact that they are affiliated with a political party and choose to bring the party's principles and projects into the council entails a hold of the party to their member. In this set-up, every transaction is utilitarian in nature; thus, that coordination of actions, mutual understanding, and genuine communicative action may not be actualized because the speech actors are focused on ideal consequences. Strategic action is the type of action evidenced by the set-up due to its being goal-oriented. The implications of employing strategic action do not fit the framework that "serve[s] as an effective forum for the expression of student ideas and sentiments"— one of the objectives of the CSSPSC, due to the violation of the ideal speech setting and the overshadowing of communicative action (College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution," 3.) Thus, affirming the strong teleological claim that the CSSPSC fails to communicate in a way that best fits a democratic institution. It does not serve its purpose because of the dominance of the subsystem of politics and the undermining of communicative action.

The Theory of Communicative Action and Student Representation

What, then, is the ideal student representation under the Habermasian lens of communicative action?

The concept of rationality paves the way towards understanding communicative rationality or communicative action. Communicative action is grounded in the fact that the participants of the speech act (utterances involving linguistic means) are rational primarily because of the way they "acquire and use knowledge."[30] Rationality is presumed in communicative action. When speech interlocutors linguistically express what they currently and consequently know from what is said while following the ideal speech conditions, there is communicative rationality.[31] A speaker is rational when they are conscious and knowledgeable of what they are saying and can evaluate themself while reaching a mutual understanding with the listener. H.P. Grice's formulation of non-natural meaningful statements—those observed in communication and are founded on conventions and the speaker's intentions— supports Habermas' conception of rationality and the attainment of mutual understanding. For Grice, to produce a non-natural meaningful utterance, the speaker must intend for the audience to pick up their intention, recognize it, and afterwards, form a belief based on the speaker's utterance.[32] These conditions are sufficient to form a rational conversation and necessary to achieve mutual understanding, the goal of communicative action. Another supplementary concept is Robert Nozick's notion of rational belief. It forwards that one of the goals of having rational belief is to suppose the truth and prevent ascribing to falsehoods.[33] In addition, Nozick[34] posits that the belief must be responsive to reason that has undergone a reliable procedure that results to true beliefs. Moreover, rational beliefs must be tolerant to revisions and modifications.[35]

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[30] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society.*

[31] Habermas.

[32] Grice, "Meaning."

[33] Nozick, The Nature of Reality.

[34] Nozick.

These procedures consist of the opportunities for deliberations within the electoral process, such as the Miting de Avance, and within the council's chambers, such as the GA.

Aside from the assessing the rationality of the belief itself, Habermas adds the capability of humans to be rational. One is rational when they are open to being corrected and correcting themselves upon gaining helpful perceptions on their stand, and these lead to sensible outcomes.[36] When a statement is challenged, the speaker should be able to defend it while the listener cooperates for them to reach an understanding. During in-chamber discussions in CSSPSC, when argumentation takes place, rationality is expected when the involved persons are trying to pursue communicative action. This is shown when a council member must prove what they are offering for other's further understanding and acceptance.

Communicative rationality is possible because of the lifeworld. These are sustained by coordinated "consensual modes of action," e.g., resources and dimensions of social actions (i.e., suffrage and mass protests).[37] The validity claims and values present in a lifeworld also prevail across generations.[38] In that way, the lifeworld always exists, if there is communication. The lifeworld uses language to communicate, whereas the system employs non-linguistic media to communicate, e.g., political power and money. These are two distinct approaches to communicate and they can co-exist in practice. The system affects the interactions with the lifeworld in a way that it becomes decentered. For example, instead of having a discussion on certain issues concerning a political figure, the political figure's position of power can communicate for them by threatening or bribing to eliminate criticism. Hence, the system can inhibit communicative action when it overpowers the communication in the lifeworld.

The Theory of Communicative Action is both a "micro-theory of rationality based on communicative coordination" and a "macro-theory of systemic integration of modern societies."[39] This theory underscores the value of personal interactions and conversations to reach an inclusive social realm. Three facets characterize communicative action: language as medium of communication, coordination of action by the participants in speech, and the goal of mutual understanding. Coordination of action implies being open and accepting to be in the same page. To successfully practice communicative action, all parties concerned must be able to attain mutual understanding. In doing so, the speakers "manifest their inner human realities"[40] while having a "practical stance" on the issue at hand as enabled by the lifeworld.[41] As mutual understanding is achieved, the speakers can express their personality, their ideas, and their context as represented by the perspective they communicate. Habermas[42] puts prime in this as he sees mutual understanding as the "inherent telos" or purpose of humanity's ability to communicate. Communication is defeated when one cannot mutually understand others and they cannot be understood by another. Mutual understanding is the goal of communicative action; thus, communicative action can be posited to lead to common knowledge and consensus building through coordination. When the facets of communicative action are observed in communication, a rational society can be achieved.

[35] Nozick.

[36] Brunkhorst, Kreide, and Lafont, *The Habermas Handbook: New Directions in Critical Theory.*

[37] Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas."

[38] Hilgerloh-Nuske, "IAPSS Political Theory SRC Webinar," September 11, 2020.

[39] Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas."

[40] Gaspar, "Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action."

[41] Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas."

[42] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason.*

Communicative action is necessary in student representation. This notion of democracy can be appropriated in the CSSPSC as an institution because it is founded on the principle of democracy. The preamble of the CSSPSC states the nature of the council and their values. According to it, the CSSPSC is "united in the desire to establish a Student Council representative of the democratic interests of the CSSP studentry"[43] Article 1 of the CSSPSC constitution also states that the CSSPSC upholds democracy as their guiding principle.[44] The democratic nature of the council necessitates communicative action and is sustained when the collective interests of the CSSP are being listened to and pursued by the student representatives. Considering the provisions above, student representation is governed by democracy. Democracy and communicative action both respect the value of cooperation and linguistic communication. These two concepts are intertwined such that democracy can be achieved through communicative action. Hence, for the purposes of this paper, it is maintained that communicative action should be upheld in student representation. A democratic process is initiated through a series of dialogues that grounds itself in self-understanding and justice, wherein rational results are drawn, given that the discussion is properly conducted and rooted in pertinent information. In this, practical reason is found in proper discourse, wherein the validity of an action is ingrained in reaching understanding. Democracy, then, is grounded in communicative action.

Habermas determined the prerequisites for a successful communicative action to take place in the lifeworld, and these conditions comprise the ideal speech setting. The ideal speech setting is based on speech integrity, absence of bias, active engagement of parties, and empowered actors. Integrity (consequently, rationality) is upheld when one acts consistently with their personal belief. The actors should also be deemed by the other as a person with integrity.[45] If their reputation is marred, the other's understanding of the actor's beliefs will be affected. Next, setting aside any prejudice or bias against the personality or ideology of the others involved in the communicative action is vital as this would impact the speakers' reasoning.[46] The procedure or setting of the conversation should not be favorable to any party. Moreover, all parties must actively engage in communicative action.[47] This means that all speakers are willing to consider the concerns of others and traverse their personal interests in pursuit of a rational discourse and mutual understanding. Finally, actors must be capable of unhindered speech and action. Speech actors must not be coerced to act towards or against a matter.[48] Their speaking environment must empower them geographically, socially, and emotionally to deliver their own claims.

In other words, these are the conditions to be satisfied by the CSSPSC to fulfill their mandate of pursuing the democratic interests of their constituents. When the ideal speech setting is unmet, communicative action cannot occur; thus, genuine student representation is not maintained. It is important to note that all possible hindrances to having an ideal speech setting should be settled before the communication.[49] While there are critics who argue that Habermas undermines the impact of other social institutions to communication,[50] as well as the undermining of other ideologies, i.e., patriarchy and capitalism, this is not highly relevant in the study due to the alignments of relevant principles and the nature of involved actors (political parties, CSSP offices, and the student body).

[43] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution," 1.

[44] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution."

[45] Gaspar, "Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action."

[46] Gaspar.

[47] Gaspar.

[48] Hilgerloh-Nuske, "IAPSS Political Theory SRC Webinar," September 11, 2020.

[49] Gaspar, "Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action."

[50] Bohman and Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas."

CONCLUSION

Genuine democracy cannot be achieved when external and internal institutions tolerate the dominance of strategic action throughout the process of selecting, electing, and operation of the CSSPSC officers. The subsystem of politics and its institutional manifestation, the student political parties, allow the colonization of the lifeworld. Hence, the effect of the student political parties should be mitigated and their current form should be modified, if not abolished.

Filipino Philosopher Ricardo Pascual envisioned a Philippine society operating under a partyless democracy. According to a lecture by Roberto Tangco, Pascual states that the competitiveness amongst the parties results to values and attitudes of "selfish individuality" and "group struggle."[51] In a partyless democracy, these individualistic attitudes are expected to be transformed into democratic and unifying ones—attitudes of "cooperation, organization, and mutual help." These values are exactly what defines communicative action, which relies on the premise that all speech actors have a common goal, can communicate freely, and trust and help each other reach this goal. Pascual identifies that political parties only encourage factionalism and division amongst individuals and groups.[52] Without political parties, as Pascual suggests, healthy political discourse towards a mutually defined good can thrive.[53] The sense of exclusivity prevents absolute cooperation—that which is without self-serving political motives. Moreover, these self-serving motives enable competition. It is the nature of competition to promote strategic action instead of communicative action governed by communicative rationality. Doing away with the notion that these student political parties drive the current of student politics will transform the public and the democratic space to ultimately give the students what they are due.

To improve the systemic affairs in the student lifeworld and to regulate the subsystem of politics, modifying the current form of student representation is necessary. This change can come from within the institution. One of the powers of the CSSPSC, as stated in their 2021 Constitution, is to: "specify the rules and regulations of the general elections of the CSSPSC" and "[a]dopt its own internal rules of government and organizational structure subject to the provisions of this Constitution."[54] The first modification is the conceptual reinvention of what student representatives should be. A student representative should be focused on rallying the community in attaining a mutual understanding and coordinating to provide for those in need. The second modification consists of the structural alterations of the student council. Student representatives can be volunteer students who are willing and may be deemed qualified by the CSSP-OSA. The model that most closely resembles this structure is that of the volunteer core groups of each department, whose members join because they simply want to serve their respective departments.

A partyless system of student representation and a renewed image of student councils will possibly entice students to participate in political discourses concerning the college. Moreover, the representatives can be qualified volunteer students selected by the CSSP-OSA, the office advising the CSSPSC. The CSSPSC can be a group of volunteer students who function like a volunteer core group representing each department, center, or institution of the CSSP, and catering to the welfare of their respective constituents as a unit. In this notion of student representation, the so-called "political arena," where aspirants and elected officers compete, will be transformed into a public sphere where healthy, rich, and understanding-oriented actions thrive.

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[51] Tangco, "Partyless Democracy: Ricardo Pascual and the Theory of Democracy."

[52] Pascual, "Causes, Ideal, and Frustration of Party System."

[53] Tangco, "Partyless Democracy: Ricardo Pascual and the Theory of Democracy."

[54] College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Student Council, "CSSP SC Constitution," 4.

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