

sociology, theoretical reflexivity is an instrument of combat against the globalizing trends of the neoliberal order. In this context, the discourse of transnationalism is the consequence of fine-tuning a critique of globalization according to existing geopolitical constellations. As an academic discourse, transnationalism erases the violence of the current global constellation. While Choy provides an eloquent discussion of migrant labor, the kind that is tied to the global capitalist logic, her labor of theorizing becomes a symptom of the metastases of imperialist benevolence. The “transnational,” as a way of reading current global flows, extends the invisibility of violence from the actual structure and experience of migrant labor to the labor of theorizing this historical juncture as “merely transnational.”

Nonetheless, for its breadth and committed scholarship, the *Empire of Care* is decidedly an indispensable document of migrant labor and how it is lived in these “interesting times.”—**SARAH RAYMUNDO**, INSTRUCTOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN.

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In a post-Martial Law scenario, the opening up of political space and reformation of social institutions gave room for nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to assemble and contribute to state building. The importance of NGO participation in development programs has been widely recognized since 1986, particularly when the National Economic Development Authority granted NGOs the right to coordinate directly with foreign governments for Official Development Assistance (ODA). Both governments and multilateral institutions acknowledge the significance of NGOs as partners for development based on their peculiar characteristics and functional niche. In a country like the Philippines, where development programs have been hijacked by corruption and bureaucracy, the relative flexibility and

responsiveness of NGOs have been highly appreciated. Because NGOs are usually homegrown in the communities they service, they are immersed in the locals' cultural practices and sensitivities, which play a critical role in community organizing and capacity building. Such organic link with the community enables them to legitimately encourage grassroots participation, which would have otherwise been difficult to achieve if it were spearheaded by unfamiliar agencies. There are even times when alternative development strategies employed by NGOs are contrasted to the governments' and multilateral institutions' seemingly imposing development agenda. The discourse starts when through ODA, NGOs are engaged by force of circumstances with the same institutions they traditionally vilify. The book *Engaging ODA: Lessons in Civil Society Participation* presents the gradients on how NGOs manage this condition. Drawing from six case studies involving agrarian reform and rural development projects, this book by ODA Watch aims to compile key learnings derived from NGOs' experiences with ODA. Qualitative methods such as focus groups discussions and key informant interviews allowed the independently commissioned researchers to present the stakeholders' self-determined appraisal of their experiences.

The case study by Maisie Faith Dagapioso deals with the Western Mindanao Community Initiatives Project (WMCIP). Funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), this project sought to increase the income of 16,000 households through community and institutional development, natural-resource management, and small-enterprise development. With Ipil Development Foundation (IDF) as partner NGO, this case shows how much space NGOs can occupy in various stages of a project cycle. While IFAD recognizes the expertise of NGOs in planning and resource mobilization, IDF ended up as service contractors for the Department of Agrarian Reform. Dagapioso points out that IDF needed to work out the tension between its role as an advocate and a service contractor. While it forwarded the advocacy of protecting the rights of the Subanen during the project design, it did not have as much influence in project implementation, but instead got caught up with deliverables as a contractor. In a tripartite framework involving government organizations (GOs), NGOs, and people's organizations, IDF's contribution was perceived to be valued just because other partners could not provide the service IDF rendered, instead of directly influencing project implementation. On this note, Dagapioso points

out the need for consistent vigilance with ODA-funded projects by scrutinizing the lead implementing agencies' principles and ensure the institutionalization of NGO participation through a clear and specific set of guidelines.

Nikki Philline de la Rosa's research on the Agrarian Reform Support Project in Agusan posits the dilemma of having NGOs and POs involved only in project implementation. The Educational Discipline in Culture and Area-based Development Services Inc., European Union's partner organization in the program, was contracted for institutional strengthening and capacity building only after the general framework had been drafted. De la Rosa draws attention to the need for NGO involvement in all phases of the project cycle to forward its broad objectives rather than end up as another service contractor. As in the first case study, the quality of tripartism is questioned as well as the gauge used to assess the project's success or failure.

One of the more interesting case studies involves the partnership between the Rural Development Institute-Sultan Kudarat (RDI-SK) and the Philippine government. With funding from the Asian Development Bank, the Agrarian Reform Communities Project was conceived. What made this case interesting is the relatively amicable relationship between the government through Department of Agrarian Reform Provincial Office (DARPO) and RDI-SK. Because of clear convergence of goals, they mutually benefited from the partnership—RDI established its legitimacy as a development force while DARPO focused on land tenure improvement. Though RDI-SK was also “contracted” to implement institutional strengthening, DARPO allowed it to maintain ownership of some programs, such as training activities, by giving direct subgrants to RDI. This way, RDI had more leverage in managing and implementing activities. Recognizing each institution's function as complementary is key to successful partnership. This case study clearly lends substance to the claim that even with major differences, NGO-GO partnership is possible.

The complex issue of land reform in Canlaon, Negros Oriental, is unraveled by George Evangelista in his case study on the Belgian Integrated Agrarian Reform Support Project (BIARSP). Operating on different frameworks, the Negros Institute for Rural Development encountered fundamental differences with BIARSP, from project conceptualization to execution. Evangelista clearly contextualizes how land reform in Canlaon is entangled with a complex web of power relations involving lawmakers, local executives, and other economic

stakeholders, which deterred both agencies from putting their concepts into practice.

The Western Samar Agricultural Resources Development Program, funded by the European Commission, exhibits the propensity of ODA programs to morph in terms of goals, strategies, and the level of NGO involvement. Joven Descanzo traces these major shifts to recommendations presented by an EC delegation sent to look into their local counterparts' complaint. Similar to other cases, operating under different expectations and standards of evaluation had led the program to succumb to the donor's framework, such as taking on a more commercial approach in terms of project objectives and conditions of NGO's contracts to placate EC's requirements. Descanzo narrates the community leaders and program staff's disappointment in the emphasis on high-value production, and how this particular ODA program illustrates that "contracting" is the elementary basis of ODA's partnership with NGOs.

However, even if NGOs have been perceived as "contractual employees" in ODA-funded projects, this does not involuntarily demote them to a trifling role. In Jermaine Baltazar Bayas's case study on Agrarian Reform Integrated Support Program II, the Philippine Network of Rural Development Institute transcended its stipulated deliverables in the contract. It was able to continue engagement by integrating ARISP-2 to a long-term program in Pampanga, even if it was left out in the initial phases of the project.

While each of these case studies presents NGOs' distinctive experiences of accomplishment and frustrations, several recurring themes are noted. The quality of a tripartism was consistently raised because of the noted trend of relegating NGOs to less significant functions. Certainly, the devil is in the details, such as how the terms partnership and engagement are defined and how this definition is operationalized. The NGOs' role in ODA-funded projects has been in an indeterminate state. Descanzo takes a stand by stating that "NGOs who feverishly sought their engagement as contractual agents need to seriously reflect on the implications of such engagement on them as agents of alternative development civil society organizations." The burden lies in the NGOs themselves on how they negotiate their relevance in these programs. Strangely enough, while NGOs are contracted because of their capacity to build sustainable institutions, the biggest obstacle they face is institutionalizing and sustaining their influential role in ODA-funded projects. While engagement with

ODA is highly contextual, as manifested by the uniqueness of each case study, all researchers highlight the necessity for a constructive forum where NGOs can share their experiences and learn from others. This book by ODA Watch responds to this call. The realistic and empirically founded recommendations and insights provide the NGOs the prescience and, more important, motivation for their future endeavors.—
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Coralie Bryant and Christina Kappaz. 2005. *Reducing Poverty, Building Peace*. Connecticut: Kumarian Press. 214 pp.

Reducing Poverty, Building Peace is mainly a collection of the many techniques and strategies recently being used by organizations worldwide in combating poverty. It begins with addressing poverty as a multidimensional problem inevitably connected to other parts of the social world, such as the economy and crime. Perceiving poverty in this perspective, it then informs the reader of the strategies and solutions that have proven themselves effective in past attempts to curb poverty. Given the very many examples presented in combating poverty, this book does not focus for too long on any particular problem or technique. It instead gleans over many examples, emphasizing breadth over depth. Not that this does it any harm, however; it contextualizes its data within main points the authors contend are essentially antipoverty.

The initial part of the book gives an overview of poverty as multidimensional and deeply connected to many other issues in society. Basically, poverty is global for two reasons: it is a feature common to all nations, and connected globally due to advances in science and technology. Hence, they conclude that poverty should be viewed equally and seriously across different countries, whether progressive or poverty-stricken.

Another important topic in the book is the idea of social exclusion. This is defined as the exclusion of the poverty-stricken from access to necessary assets (e.g., health and financial security) due to their status. Contrasted to social exclusion are some of the more common perspectives on poverty, such as that of income-based analysis wherein the delusion of a “rising economic tide” will sink the level of poverty