COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION: THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

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Like the much-abused word "development", the terms "people's participation" and "community organization" today no longer inspire easy confidence and trust. Now, more than ever, their meanings reside in the context of their actual use and indeed, in the identity of their users. Community organization, especially, has been effectively de-contextualized from its original moorings, and as a consequence, has re-emerged as nothing more than an ideologically neutral technique that can be placed in the service of any master.

This phenomenon — the appropriation of radical and populist concepts and methodologies and the evacuation of their original value premises as they are harnessed by planners, technocrats and development experts for their own ends — has become a notable feature of development programs in the Third World. The old vocabulary of patronal planning by government agencies and aid-giving institutions has been adequately refurbished and enriched through the clever appropriation of progressive language. But what is even more important is that the very process of political subjugation and pacification itself need no longer be seen as such. Today, entire communities can be led into captivity under the banner of people's participation.

Today's mobilization campaigns launched by Third World authoritarian governments are seldom sponsored by cold and mindless bureaucrats. The developmentalist governments have learned their lessons well. They are now among the most avid clients of community organizing experts. They too speak the language of participation and of popular leadership — but only for as long as the realities dealt with do not go beyond the local community level. The situation is such that one may now accurately speak of the "absorption" of people's participation or its repressive incorporation into the machinery of domination.

Given such a milieu, it has become urgent to re-state the first meanings of these terms as they were understood in non-government popular settings. Perhaps the easiest way to do this is to review the unstated assumptions behind these terms. In the process, it should be possible to generate further thoughts for new concepts and methods in the effort to advance and enrich the conceptual armamentarium of authentic people's organizing.

Many groups and individuals claim to be community organizers. But apart from the fact that they all operate within a community setting, there is no recognizable thread in their activities to indicate that they share a holistic and common framework. Based on their perspective of society and its concommitant implications in practice, three types of community organizers can be distinguished — the *apologetic*, the *liberal*, and the *liberative*.

These categories do not mechanically refer to the setting or agency in which an organizer works — government or NGO — or to the issues and methods that are used. Rather, organizers differ and can be categorized on the basis of the premises that underpin the organizing process — e.g., analysis of the structure of society — and the goals of community organization. While the agency that an organizer works in largely delimits the spaces for movement, an apologetic organizer within an agency whose perspective is essentially liberative, or a liberative organizer within an apologetic set-up, are not only distinct possibilities but actual realities. In the same way, while particular methodologies may be largely identified with a particular type of organizer, the mere use of specific methods does not automatically categorize an organizer. It is the rationale and direction for the choice of methodology which is determined by the type of organizer.

The Apologetic Community Organizer

The apologetic community organizer accepts the essential viability of the existing system. To him, the societal order is based on consensus and cooperation where the various sectors of society relate through reciprocity and interdependence. The State represents the will of the people, is generally responsive and promotes the common good. Such a perspective views economic differentiation and even inequality as social necessities which must be harnessed in order that development can be achieved. Since the State represents the people, then the direction of development is clearly laid out and what remains is to convince people to participate wholeheartedly in such undertakings.

Within this perspective, the role of the community organizer is limited to that of working to strengthen the system. The organizer is a tool towards the realization of the plans of both local and national leadership and as such, he operates as the intermediary between national policies and their implementation by the people. Since policies and thrusts are unquestioningly accepted, the organizer becomes a conduit who possesses some skills to ensure acceptance of such policies by the people. Within this perspective, the organizer can only view the masses in a condescending manner. Thus, he easily becomes prescriptive and even dictatorial, reflecting the same authoritarian attitudes as those who hold the reins of political

power. Organizing, in this context, is undertaken primarily to change people's attitudes so that, no matter what sacrifice is demanded of them, they willingly accept the plans of higher authorities who have already pre-determined the people's needs. The basic thrust of an apologetic organizer, therefore, is to legitimize the system via the delivery of services that the State determines. Very often, he confines himself to the distribution of dole-outs, encouraging people to intervene only in the implementation of ready-made programs, thus cultivating an unquestioning obedience to the State and its local representatives.

Apologetic community organizers — the family planning agent whose basic function is to fulfill his acceptor quota, the extension worker whose intervention remains on the level of telling the people what to do, the other State bureaucrats — are techno-fascists who wittingly or unwittingly deny the people their right to participation. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the State in most Third World countries and because of the structures that such states perpetuate, community organizing, or what masquerades as such, is ultimately anti-participative.

It must be noted that in recent years, this sinister appropriation of the techniques of community organization has taken up a large portion of the budgets of most ministries of government. In the Philippines, it is ironic to see that an outwardly authoritarian State, which thrives on the repression of the majority, hires the services of trained community organizers either as private consultants or as members of the staff. It would be stretching the imagination too far to believe that these moves were inspired by a genuine belief in the value of people's participation.

The Liberal Community Organizer

The liberal community organizer, on the other hand, sees the necessity of altering certain aspects of the system. He accepts the role that conflict and exploitation play in the society. While accepting the essential viability of the system, he recognizes the existence of certain systemic aberrations. Very often, the liberal organizer accounts for these by attacking three basic areas — the fact that leadership both at the local and at the national level is not responsive to the needs of the majority, the fact that social inequalities and exploitation are too grave, and the fact that the people are not organized enough to act as a countervailing force. Thus, the liberal organizer is trapped within the confines of the existing structure and yet aims at resolving issues that are actually structurally generated.

Because of the perspective that realizes the manifestations but refuses to recognize the structural causes, a liberal community organizer is usually torn between the pull of the apologists and the attraction of the more radical organizers. Ultimately, a liberal organizer ends up trying to improve the system, instituting improvements without actually confronting the root causes of the problems. In a very real sense, he is a reformist who vainly hopes that an aroused citizenry can overcome problems which he refuses to recognize as basically structural. The liberal organizer, then, sees the process of organizing as an end in itself, where some structural improvements can be accomplished, inequality lessened, and leadership made more responsive because the people are organized.

But this conception of organizing implies a particular approach. Since the primary aim is to develop the necessary conditions so that people's power can emerge, much of the emphasis is placed on the locality and the issues that directly confront the people in the area. Apart from being localist, the organizer relies very heavily on the perceptions and aspirations of the people. Because his vision is limited to a romantic ideal of militant communities that can stand up against the powerful forces that threaten them — regardless of the fact that these forces are not analyzed from a holistic perspective — the organizer confronts problems on an issue-to-issue basis, hoping for a time in the future when there are no more issues to confront. And yet knowing that many of these problems are generated by conditions beyond the confines of the community, the organizer falls short of any intervention that links up community issues with larger social, economic and political problems.

Lacking a vision upon which to anchor change, the organizer becomes tailist to the limited perceptions of the people. Thus, he is very often confined to tactic and process-centered activities aimed generally at obtaining welfare gains for the community. The liberal organizer enhances participation among the people but is unable to raise the people to a level of participation where they can deal with issues with roots that go beyond the community.

The standard response of such an organizer to the question of direction is that the people know best. The people initially appreciate the entry of a liberal organizer but ultimately wonder where all the activities are leading to.

The Liberative Community Organizer

The liberative organizer views society as a system woven around the exploitation of the majority and where the existing leadership cannot be responsive to the needs of the people. In fact, a liberative organizer accepts that the people confront not only private oppressors but the forces of the State itself. In the Third World, what people face are States which have found common cause with the agencies of the world capitalist system. Under this arrangement, the State plays the role of foreman to its people to facilitate their exploitation and the plunder of the country's resources by world capitalism. In exchange, regimes that have long lost whatever shred of legitimacy they might have started with are kept in power.

A liberative organizer, therefore, aims at restructuring the system, using community organization as the initial step in developing a people who can react to local conditions within the perspective of the larger national context. Thus, emphasis is placed on consciousness-raising and politicalization, building upon local and sectoral struggles to create an appreciation of the root causes of these problems. Such struggles are always situated within the context of historical forces and a vision of an alternative social order. It is the liberative community organizer most Third World countries have to develop because he not only encourages people's participation but also lays the groundwork for the conditions that will allow such forms of participation to flourish.

In exceptional situations, where Third World governments are genuinely trying to restructure society to be more responsive to the needs of the people, a liberative organizer does not degenerate into an apologist of the system even while working within the existing structure. The liberative organizer must act as a critical agent who can help to develop autonomous community organizations that can each act as a collective conscience and a popular check to ensure that policies are not distorted and do not result in ossified rhetoric.

The rest of this paper deals with a concretization of the liberative organizer, his analysis of the communities we face, the factors that have given rise to such communities, the limits of organizing, and some methodological guidelines that would ensure genuine people's participation.

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COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVES

TYPE / PERSPECTIVE	APOLOGETIC	LIBERAL	LIBERATIVE
view of society	viability of existing system based on consensus and reciprocating	essential viability of existing system but necessity of altering aspects due to aberrations	necessity of overhauling existing system since it is based on exploitation
view of the state	leadership is responsive and promotes the common good	leadership is *not* responsive because people do not exert a countervailing force	leadership *cannot* be responsive and is an instrument for repression
view of societal divisions	social necessity which should be united as a result of interdependence	differentiating but must be lessened	dividing, oppressive
view of community organization	strengthening the system	tinkering with systemic aberrations	restructuring the system
role of community organization	tool	end	step
change agent	techno-fascist	reformist	revolutionary
view of the masses	condescending, prescriptive, dictatorial	romantic, tailist	objective, dialectical
organizing emphasis	attitudes	tactics, process-centered	consciousness-raising
basis for organizing	pre-determined needs, service delivery	felt needs	objective needs
major method	dole-outs, program implementation	localist, issue-based, evocative	class-based, provocative, situating local issues within the context of historical forces and a vision of an alternative social order.
goal/vision	unity between the people and the state, servility and unquestioning obedience	minimizing strains, people's power	awareness of relations between local, national and global structures, experience in limited struggles and experimentation with alternative structures towards full involvement in national transformation

The Communities We Face

While people's participation remains the foremost goal as well as the primary process of any genuine community organization effort, the results of organizing have been varied. On the one hand, organizers who abandoned these efforts rationalized their act by concluding that certain communities are not ready for organizing efforts. They point to the supposedly almost insurmountable apathy and indifference of the people. On the other extreme are numerous examples of successful experiments where communities have actively taken their destinies into their own hands, even to the extent of laying down their lives for the causes they believe in.

What types of communities do we generally face in most Third World countries?

These are communities which have been marginalized by societal forces beyond their control, people who have accepted their fate as that of simple recipients of national and international developments.

Because of the demand for particular commodities such as bananas and pineapples, rice-growing communities which once could at least survive because they produced their own staple food, have now been enticed to shift to export crops. Without understanding the vagaries of the market, these communities find themselves powerless when the market finally dries up and they cannot sell their products. Unfortunately, they can no longer return to growing rice since years of massive infusion of chemical fertilizers and inputs used for export crops have rendered their lands infertile.

We face communities and people who are capable only of reacting to conditions which threaten their very survival. Very often, their reactions do not go beyond grumbling about the issues and finding ways of individually coping with such situations.

The devaluation of local currency and consequently the increases in the prices of farm inputs, consumer items and over-all cost of living due to State policies are perceived as situations beyond their control. The usual responses are to tighten belts, look for new sources of income which are generally absent, and even mercilessly compete against each other for the few scarce resources. These point to an acceptance of a fate of powerlessness. People hardly ever consider the option that they themselves can collectively do something about their situation.

We face communities which have an almost total lack of understanding of the structures that determine their lives.

Urban poor communities, fazed by the prospects of demolition and forced relocation, find it hard to comprehend why lands they have improved for years are now being claimed by both the

government and wealthy individuals. While these communities see immediate causes — the need to beautify the city for the First Lady's caprices, the need to artificially erase all manifestations of poverty so that tourists and foreign funders will believe our nation is developing — rarely do these communities relate their problems to structures of oppression in society. Very often, the explanations that are given only reach up to the level of misdirected priorities and the lack of conscience of those in power.

We face people who, through generations, have accepted powerlessness as a permanent feature of their lives and are thus unable to even perceive reality as problematic. Above all, we face people who have forfeited the right to intervene in decisions and policies that determine the quality of their lives.

For most people, especially in the rural areas, the entry of community organizers is greeted with hope. However, faced with questions that try to ascertain whether they perceive the necessity of actively involving themselves in a process of change, they usually react by surrendering this option to standard leaders. Realizing in the process that such leaders will not help them solve their problems, they rationalize their poverty and exploitation as being god-given. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear people argue that there are certain advantages in their lifestyle that even the wealthy do not possess.

Factors that Have Contributed to the State of Communities

The legacy of colonialism. Most countries, whose historical development was aborted by the intervention of colonial powers, have produced a people whose initiative and sense of potency have been systematically and consistently killed by the overpowering force of colonialism. Through both repression and ideological mechanisms, the people were conditioned to believe in their inferiority on the one hand, and the benevolence of those in power, on the other. For those who chose to assert their rights, outright repression was the answer. Slowly, through successive generations, the people were taught to accept their fate as passive objects of forces they could not understand.

Class-divided societies. Because these societies and these communities are divided into classes with necessarily differential access to both wealth and power, the majority of the people have been relegated to positions of absolute powerlessness. Because they have more resources, because they are more articulate, because they deceive the masses by ostensibly speaking and acting on their behalf, because they ultimately control the life chances of the people, the upper classes invariably become the repositories of political power. The masses are caught in a bind. On the one hand, they are more easily manipulated since they cannot grasp the total situation and thus trust that their self-appointed leaders are indeed on their side. On the other hand, even if some of them see through these machinations, they cannot possibly contest the power of those whose lands they till, those to whom they owe money, those who control middleman operations, those who have access to centers of power beyond their own reach.

Direct state intervention. In many countries, even participation has been pre-empted by the state. Issues that should be objects of collective decision-making have been removed from the realm of public debate and in their place, the state has introduced forms of cooperative participation. Decisions are made by the state and people are given a taste of participation only on matters of implementation. Thus, politics has been absorbed by central authorities as well as by local leaders. Finally, it is not uncommon to hear of state repression when communities are belligerent in asserting their right to politics.

Lack of information. In class-divided societies, especially those under authoritarian governments, information is kept safely away from the masses through various means. By the sheer lack of resources, the people are effectively cut off from even the ordinary information sources. The media are beyond their reach since they are confined to very limited areas and cannot get any exposure to developments in other areas. Also, information is actually withheld through censorship, and perhaps, most significantly, by clogging the channels of information with trivia and noise which have a numbing effect upon the intellect. This lack of information on the one hand, and an overdose of inanities on the other, paralyze the people such that they are robbed even of a concept of reality and a vision of a better life.

Pressures of a hand-to-mouth existence. When people are preoccupied with their own physical survival, there is very little chance for reflection. People are reduced to day-to-day activities, unable to consider what is happening around them. For those who take the effort to reflect upon their conditions, their thoughts, limited as they are by all the previously mentioned factors, cannot be shared by others, much less are they the objects of collective scrutiny. Their isolation necessarily detracts from the possibility that collective discussions can lead to clearer conceptions and consequently determine actions to deal with their situations. People are thus consigned to pre-political states because they are not even granted the option of meaningful participation. What emerges is an apparent apathy and indifference among the masses.

Liberative Community Organization as the Initial Step Towards National Transformation

Community organizers must always be conscious of the role they play in the national context. Because of the type of communities we face in most Third World countries, it is community organizing that can effect the initial breakthrough. Faced with communities that have accepted powerlessness as a way of life, participation in the shaping of a national future can only be accomplished in stages. The first stage is learning to confront reality at close range, in the immediate milieu one belongs to. But at the same time, knowing that community organization is just a step towards more basic changes, the organizer must continuously view local issues within the context of the larger social structure.

There is another function of community organization which organizers must strive to fulfill. Much of the experimentation at the local community level must be geared towards trying out new forms of social arrangements that are practical applications of relationships expected in a transformed social order. Community organization must be a venue through which the national vision can be fleshed out.

Experiments with communal farms, various forms of cooperatives, alternative leadership patterns and the like do not only serve to effect meaningful changes in communities, but also to set the stage for forms of social relationships that could be viable in a transformed society. What are tested out in such cases are not only principles and visions but actual forms of organization. These should become the blueprints for an alternative future.

Structural Limits to Community Organization

The organizer must have a clear perception that most problems at the local level are due to very well entrenched structures at the national level. As such, to review the limits to community organization is not intended to induce helplessness and despair, but to promote a realistic sensitivity to the shared character of the human problems that local communities face. It is important to break the parochialism that community organization is greatly exposed to, a parochialism that feeds on the romance of a small community harnessing all its resources in order to overcome gigantic problems. The constant reminder that local realities do not exist in a vacuum, but are part and parcel of a global system, is necessary. If an organizer deludes himself into believing that local problems are not functional consequences of larger problems, the community can only end up frustrated.

The organizer must also be conscious of the local as well as the national power structure. Very often, organizers have made the mistake of viewing the wielders of power mechanistically as absolutely incapable of decisions that benefit the people. The organizer must make the people realize that on certain issues, those in power can exercise a certain flexibility that allows them to concede some demands for as long as this will enable them to play out one community against another, thereby preventing the formation of solidarity and maintaining themselves in power.

In the remote highland communities in northern Philippines, where tribal Filipinos like the Kalinga and Bontoc live, a "peace pact" system has evolved which extends security to travelers from other villages. Under this system, a village enters into an agreement with neighboring villages. Elders, speaking respectively for their entire communities, pledge to mutually secure the lives and properties of all the villages within the peace pact, as if these belonged to their own individual communities.

In recent years, these bilateral peace pacts have become the model for broader multilateral peace pacts in which several villages come for a *bodong* to express their solidarity with each other against a perceived common threat. For the Kalinga and the Bontoc, that threat is the hydro-electric dam that the Philippine government is presently building on the Chico River, using loans from the World Bank.

The government has been very blatant in its attempt to break an emerging united front among Igorot communities (the generic term used to refer to the tribal Filipinos living on the Cordillera Ridge, i.e., the Kalinga, Bontoc, Kankanai, Ibaloi, etc.). At least two tactics have been used, posing considerable difficulties to the beleaguered communities. First, the military contingent sent to protect the engineers and surveyors of the construction project included many draftees from the Bontoc villages. The Bontoc Igorots were thus placed in a position where they had to fight the Kalinga Igorots. This tactic viciously capitalized on old inter-tribal grudges and aimed at reopening ancient wounds that may have been partly healed by the peace pact system. Second, the government announced that of the four dams to be erected at different points of the powerful Chico River, the first two on Bontoc territory were to be permanently shelved, leaving two dams to be built further downstream on Kalinga land. This move has provided the breeding ground for opportunism among the Bontoc

who now find little reason to join the concerted struggle against the dams.

Clearly, what we have here is a situation in which communities must now confront the forces of the State in an effort to save themselves from what they perceive to be their certain dissolution and death as coherent villages as a consequence of dislocation or resettlement. For these highland Filipinos who have never been dependent on any government institution for obtaining their material requirements or for regulating their relationships with one another, there are no ideological dilemmas posed by the fact that the enemy here is the government itself. The Bontoc and the Kalinga have always perceived themselves to be self-reliant, autonomous, and self-sustaining communities. They have asked nothing from government, except to be left alone in peace. As one Kalinga elder eloquently put it to a high Philippine government official in a dialogue: "God gave us our lands in Kalinga. God gave you yours in Manila. Keep to yours!"

(quoted from Randolf S. David, "Developing the Power of Communities to Defend Themselves: Towards a People's Security" in *Access to Justice*, edited by Harry M. Scoble and Laurie S. Wiseberg, Zed Books Ltd., 1985, pp. 185-186.)

The organizer must also be ready for the repression that the ruling class may inflict on organized communities either to serve as a negative example to others or to prevent the growing militance of other communities.

Some communities have been directly confronted by the national government. The massacres of entire villages and the hamletting of others are examples of the use of direct forms of repression to keep effective participation away from the people.

Some Methodological Guidelines for Liberative Community Organizers

Organization with a vision. It is not enough for organizers to cling to the vague vision of a potent people collectively pursuing their interests. The organizer must clarify the larger purpose within which organized, participative and militant communities can have some instrumental meaning. Organizing without a concrete model of an alternative future can only lead to superficial and directionless actions that can only end in frustration and heighten the sense of powerlessness among the people.

A vision of a more desirable society is the framework for a critique of existing reality. Before entering a community, the organizer must have a clear vision of the type of society that will best suit the national situation. This should include an understanding of the interplay of forces that produce the existing reality, the basic structural determinants that hold the reality together, the manner and form in which national and international forces impinge on communities.

Many organizers have found themselves in the embarrassing situation of having all the skills required for organizing work and yet having very little substantive knowledge to impart to the people. In one training seminar, an organizer, after explaining the techniques for structural analysis, was asked by the people how the local system of usury is related to the national situation. The organizer could only reply that this would be tackled at some other time. An-

other organizer, when asked for more information on the economic crisis of the country could only respond in generalities. In both situations and countless other cases, not only was the credibility of the organizer undermined, but the chance to widen the people's grasp of their own situation was lost.

In another training seminar for community leaders, after the trainor had given an extended critique of the present situation, the people began to think out an alternative scenario for the future. Knowing fully well that their initial attempts were unsystematic and vague, they asked the trainor to give, even if only in outline form, possible national scenarios more conducive to their aspirations. Not having a clear vision on the matter, the trainor weakly responded that that was up to the people to decide. The initial reaction was one of disbelief, then a growing suspicion that the trainor was hiding things from the people. Finally, upon realizing that the trainor indeed had no real answer, they became frustrated. They could not imagine how they could come up with the answers when this educated and experienced individual could not offer a viable response.

For community organizers armed with a definite vision to intervene in communities is not the same as using the organizing process to manipulate the people into directions the latter are not wholeheartedly committed to. It is imperative for an organizer to check at every point the appropriateness as well as the correctness of his vision, not only in terms of his grasp of reality, but also in terms of the perceptions and reactions of the people. The organizer must have the openness to listen to and evaluate all other points of view. In no situation must he be so dogmatic as to insist on his perspective in spite of the doubts of the people or to manipulate information so that his vision will be accepted. Thus, what is required of an organizer is for him to enter a community with a well thought-out vision he intends to flesh out and correct in the

process of intervening in the community. Through such a situation, the organizer ensures that the organizing process is a truly symbiotic one where the people and the organizer work together to create a future for the benefit of the masses. In such a relationship, the organizer contributes skills, a coherent vision that people can react to, and information previously inaccessible to the masses. On the other hand, the people contribute their understanding of reality based on their material experiences which the organizer can never have, the venue to try out new ways of organizing social life, and the pressure of number so that transformation can be effected.

Some political activists, believing sincerely in the correctness of their political line, have lost all their credibility because of a closed-minded insistence on their way of looking at things. People will ultimately see through outright manipulation and the effects of such a realization will be to doubt the sincerity of the organizer and any other organizer from then on, and perhaps once again retreat into the more comfortable conditions of just coping with the present.

Class-based organizing. Much organizing hides behind a populist facade. Very often, organizers insist on a romantic perception of homogeneous communities which can be organized as totalities. Class interests, differential access to power, and actual relations of power are glossed over. By so doing, the organizer may only serve to strengthen the existing power structure and consequently bring the majority farther away from power.

An organizer must consciously identify the contending classes within a community, taking special care not to mechanically subdivide classes from the vantage point only of the community. The organizer must first have a grasp of the national class distinctions, since no community can be organized in isolation from the larger societal structure. Having done that, the organizer must then assess the community to be organized, distinguishing classes as much as possible and as

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closely to the national class structure, but taking into consideration the dimensions of power operating within the community. Having identified the divisions, the organizer must then focus his attention on the powerless, the dispossessed, as the target population. To ensure genuine participation within a community, it is this sector that must be strengthened so that the people can intervene in community and later in national affairs more effectively. Without strengthening this class, the organizer will become an unwitting tool in the propagation of the essentially inequitable economic and political situation. Communities characterized by a large degree of class homogeneity, of course, must not be artificially subjected to class differentiation. In study cases, the organization must be conscious of social differentiations like the relative access and even subservience of some members of the community to the forces of power outside the geographic boundaries.

Organizing on the basis of class must not be mechanically applied. In many communities, there are people who are not exactly exploited nor disadvantaged, but who for some reason or another demonstrate a politicized consciousness. Such people should not be excluded, rather they must be encouraged as allies and occasionally even as leaders. However, while it is tempting to rely on middle-level people, teachers, professionals, etc. because they are easier to develop, the organizer must give more emphasis to the workers and peasants who are the exploited. Middle-level people, while they can be very effective and can even become declassed in consciousness, can be counter-productive to the organizing process. First, especially in rural areas, they tend to have an unconscious condescending attitude towards the masses. Second, by virtue of their positions in the community, they have more access to power than the majority and because of this, may tend to resolve issues through access rather than through collective action.

In a study of the potential consciousness of rural leaders, we discovered three basic factors that interplayed to produce a consciousness level among the people. First was the experience of oppression which is not the same as the simple fact that one was objectively exploited. This factor accounted for the difference in consciousness levels of younger and older farmers. Unlike the phenomenon of youth activism in the cities, the younger generation in the rural areas seemed more conservative than their elders. Second were the relative benefits they derived from the existing system. Although there is a direct relationship between class and access to power, what was important was that whatever class one came from, consciousness seemed to be determined more by actual practice than by simple class position. Thus, a landless farmer who happened to be a favorite godchild of the local community leader was more conservative than a small landowner. Third, while again this has some obvious relation at least to income level, the degree of exposure to new ideas and the capacity to be excited by them played a very important role. Thus, bus conductors who, as a result of their job, were exposed to various areas and people, seemed to have greater potential for critical thought than those whose worlds were confined by the geographic boundaries of the community.

A brief note must be made on the relationship between class and gender. It is a fact that apart from being oppressed by class relations, women suffer additional exploitation because of their sex. The emancipation of women must be viewed not as a separate struggle but as one that cannot be resolved while class relations constitute the dominant form of exploitation. This is not to say that women must not be organized or must be asked to wait until class contradictions disappear. Rather, organizers must be conscious that women's emancipation is a result not only of educating men or even women, but can be best accomplished by women intervening actively in community struggles and in the process asserting their rights and proving their potential and actual value. Equality for women, therefore, like other assertions of people's rights, involves both consciousness-raising as well as the practice of such rights which can only come from struggle.

Organization in isolation. Since local troubles are invariably traceable back to national and even global problems, the organizer must always be conscious that even if the venue for organizing is a community, the sights should always be towards the structural determinants on the level of the national situation. Confined to a well-defined geographic area, it is easy to lose sight of the larger milieu. Many times, organizers and the people in communities fall into the trap of believing that local issues can be effectively solved at their level. There are two usual results of this shortsightedness. On the one hand, problems whose roots are really national and even global in character, are never really solved within one community. After a series of struggles with no solution seemingly in sight, the people easily get frustrated and start to doubt their new-found faith in collective action. On the other hand, it is possible that certain gains may be attained but very often, the burden is passed on to other communities.

An organizer who finds himself in this situation may temporarily rejoice over a minor victory only to realize that the people have developed an inward-looking, selfish approach to problems that are shared by others like them. A people with this conception will have difficulty in linking up with parallel organizations and communities, thus breeding isolationism and individualism relative to other communities.

Politicalization/conscientization. The strength upon which any community organization rests and from which meaningful forms of participation emerge is the degree of politicalization of the people. To politicize a people is to help them recover the right to define their own reality, to determine an alternative future, and to act collectively towards this vision. In communities where decision-making has been pre-empted by the state or members of the local ruling class, the task of an organizer is to restore the political process by enabling the people to intervene in the process. This means that decision-making points that have been converted into managerial or engineering problems must become objects of debate and discussion. This must start by making the people see reality not as a given, but as a process that they can intervene in. To render the present problematic requires that the people first accept that they are entitled to a better kind of life. While this seems to be stating the obvious, experience will show that the ordinary men's sights are severely limited by an acceptance of their present state as their natural lot in life. While they may dream of lifestyles they see, hear or read about, these fantasies are also very superficial aspirations for the trappings, and not the substance, of a better life.

The characteristics of a better life will enable people to react to their present situation and raise the level of discussion to structural pre-conditions that are necessary for this alternative future. The same process will situate specific issues within a larger perspective. It is important that the people and the organizer are firmly grounded in reality since this vision must be feasible and attainable in order to encourage the people to act.

It is the specific task of the organizer to be alert to

entry points where the discussions can be related to larger issues and not confined to the community in isolation.

In the process of politicalization, the organizer must determine the correct mix between the local and the national. On the one hand, it is very tempting for the organizer to encourage people to organize in order to prove the viability of collective action. And yet this may lead to an isolationist perspective. On the other hand, to over-emphasize the national and global components, especially at the start of organizing, may only lead to defeatism and despair. That is, the people can be so overwhelmed by the scope and complexity of the problems that they can only retreat into inaction.

In an attempt to show the women that the issue of health must be situated within the national context, a group of organizers provided a situationer that showed the transnationalization of the drug industry, the connivance of the national government and the health profession. While the organizers intended to show the partial viability of herbal medicine program, the women could only react by saying that with enemies as large as that, there was no way they could win.

The end goal of conscientization must be the determination to act upon convictions. Action must not only be determined, it must always be organized and collective. The people must see, through experience in small, concrete struggles, that their collective strength is effective. From minor actions and victories, the people can then start to challenge the larger reality.

The organizer must ensure that the consciousness generated by struggles on local issues is translated into an understanding and a readiness to concretely express solidarity with other communities. A people who can fight for their rights but who cannot start to be concerned about similar problems in other communities is not really politicized. For as long as the people do not see the necessity to link up with other communities as well as to contribute to the struggles of others, the organizer's task is incomplete.

When a copper smelter plant was being planned in a community in Batangas, the people fought against it. They were highly organized and successful enough to force the national government to halt its plans. After the victory, the government quietly proceeded to set up the same plant in another part of the country. There was hardly a whimper from the first community. Even the organizers seemed much too preoccupied with new issues to bother about another community which would not have to carry the burden they so successfully defeated.

Thus, the organizer must instill in the people the responsibility that goes especially with victory.

Creating space for reflection. In order to ensure that the politicalization process is effective, the organizer must deliberately help to break down existing obstacles that constrain people from engaging in reflection and collective discussion.

In a fishing community, meetings were initially called when the fishermen got back to shore. However, most of the fishermen were simply too tired to engage in any form of discussion. In addition, this was the only time they had for relaxation and for their families. There was simply no available time, especially considering the lack of appreciation that the fishermen had for the organizing process. The organizers then decided to accompany fishermen in their boats, gaining a first-hand appreciation of fishermen's life. At the same time, the hours of waiting for nets to be hauled were transformed into venues for discussion. This was the breakthrough that was needed in order to motivate fishermen to look forward to more collective discussions.

Two main courses of action can be taken. First, to engage in income-generating programs that would free some time in order to reduce the preoccupation with earning a living. Second, to engage the people in small issues that can serve as the concrete bases from which reflection and collective discussion can emerge. In undertaking the former, the organizer must be conscious that such activities do not act as palliatives to create the illusion of the essential viability of the system and that the people content themselves with minor victories and welfare gains. What is important is that people have time to discuss and deepen their understanding of the present and concretize their vision for the future.

Organized Organizers

Organizers, like the people, cannot survive effectively in isolation. Unfortunately, while most organizers are skilled in organizing people and even whole communities, it is ironic that organizers themselves are not organized. Organizers must view themselves as cadres that do the spadework for eventual national transformation. As such, they must share a common vision, constantly exchange experiences, and collectively scrutinize each other's work. In short, among themselves, organizers must practice what they preach to the people. Without an organization, organizers cannot overcome the isolation of community organization and the parochialism that emerges from working in geographically confined venues.

Organizers, of course, face the problem of not being able to meet regularly because, like many peasants, they are geographically cut off from each other. However, even if they try to set aside regular periods for collective reflection, given the exigencies of community organizing, organizers, unlike office workers, cannot stick to a regular schedule. Attempts to get organizers to sit down together always find some who simply cannot predict developments in the community and therefore cannot just pack up and leave.

Be that as it may, organizers must constantly attempt to meet, not only to learn from each other from shared experiences, but to deepen and reinforce the commitment which is so crucial among those who decide to cast their fortunes with the people.

Finally, organized organizers are crucial venues for linking up local organizations with each other. For as long as communities assert their rights and demands in isolation, no real change can come about. Organized organizers can provide the initial impetus for a network of autonomous village level organizations that can effectively intervene in the national and even global structures that ultimately determine each individual's life. It is through such a mechanism that organizing acts as a necessary tool in ensuring people's participation in a working democracy.