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**People, Profit, and Politics: State-Civil Society
Relations in the Context of Globalization**
**Editors: Ma. Glenda S. Lopez Wui and
Teresa Encarnacion Tadem**

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MA. GLENDA S. LOPEZ WUI AND
TERESA ENCARNACION TADEM, EDS.

People, Profit, and Politics: State-Civil Society Relations in the Context of Globalization

Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines, 2006. 237 pages.

After a period of economic disarray and political unrest, which became increasingly disconcerting toward the end of Ferdinand Marcos's reign, radical structural changes to usher in a genuinely democratic and developmental state remain glaringly elusive. Except for administrative and institutional reforms that have been orchestrated sparingly—not to mention selectively—from Corazon Aquino to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, deeply entrenched institutions, both formal and informal, continue to undermine good governance and promote specific sectoral interests while ignoring others. The preponderance of elite democracy and the concomitant overdependence of impoverished sectors on dole-outs betray a flawed social contract that endorses inequality. With leaders being driven by a neoliberal philosophy, which favors the perverse accumulation of profits through deregulation and trade liberalization rather than social development through distribution and people empowerment, the progressive initiatives that some academics, politicians, and technocrats espouse have been continually stymied. Moreover, notwithstanding the emergence of civil society groups that succeed sporadically to implement necessary checks and balances against the state's otherwise untrammelled use (and misuse) of its powers, the prospect of mustering substantial grassroots involvement in policy making remains constrained. These realities are laid out insightfully in Glenda Lopez Wui and Teresa Encarnacion Tadem's book on diverse, yet intertwined, cases of state-civil society relations in the context of globalization.

People, Profit, and Politics vividly depicts the dynamics of state-civil society relations in the Philippines while situating it within a broader and unarguably intricate socioeconomic and political landscape. Using case studies on four selected domestic industries to illustrate the effects of globalization, particularly on the process and outcome of state-civil society engagement, the authors argue that the prevailing framework of global economic transformation, i.e., neoliberalism, all at once enables and enfeebles civil society's constructive involvement in decision making. "Political opportunities for

civil society to engage the state at both the local and national levels” (223) are realized to an extent, but “exogenous factors that . . . inhibit prospects for mobilization” (225) and forces that favor “particular sorts of claims to be advanced rather than others” hinder sustained participation. Furthermore, the authors argue compellingly that the interaction between and among public-sector representatives and private-sector groups is complex and often contentious, underscoring the skewed distribution of material benefits and political influence.

The compilation is commendable insofar as it provides a rich account of the multifarious permutations of private-sector involvement in policy making. From Sharon Quinsaat’s analysis of mobilization activities vis-à-vis vegetable importation, to Joel Ariate’s assessment of threats to the hog industry, through to Glenda Lopez Wui’s breakdown of challenges to the garment industry, and Ronald Molmisa’s juxtaposition of consumer and corporate interests in the telecommunications industry, the contributors to this book show how external forces (i.e., international agencies and the agreements and contracts they spearhead) and internal structural arrangements (i.e., state-instituted political space for civil society engagement) mesh to produce an obscenely partial system of rewards and sanctions. Also, by presenting a relatively thorough theoretical elucidation of concepts integral to its discussion (such as globalization, civil society, civil society relations, and political opportunity structures), the authors make it possible for the uninitiated reader to understand the mechanisms and relations that characterize the process and determine the consequences of policy making. Equally noteworthy is the contributors’ use of historical vignettes to supplement their key arguments. This approach permits an appreciation of experiences that influenced or continue to influence civil society actors’ engagement strategies and reveals the conditional nature of such engagement.

What this collection of studies lack, however, is an assessment that highlights the implications of the prevailing state-civil society arrangement on future engagements. In effect, the authors fail to address questions on whether or not the current trend of civil-society involvement will persist. What would promote a more active and successful engagement? What would prevent it? Would processes of globalization help or hinder the further expansion of political space for progressive participation? Are we experiencing a botched process of genuine democratization, or merely a protracted one?

Moreover, Lopez Wui and Encarnacion Tadem’s work limits its articulation of recurrent relationship patterns between the state and its constituency

to a strictly institutional framework, with its emphasis on political opportunity structures. Putting a high premium on this approach is undeniably helpful to readers in comprehending how the presence (or absence) of specific bureaucratic mechanisms—within the state apparatus or formal institutional initiatives (i.e., laws and agreements) that state actors implement (or do not)—actually encourage, legitimize, and regulate social action. However, other factors such as norms and values are given less importance and less space for illumination. Although all four case studies put forth varying hypotheses about the causes of inequality and resistance, questions as to the values that condone material and political disparity, on the one hand, and values that condemn them, on the other hand, demand answers. Does globalization create a new system of values or preserve the status quo? Are the values that drive globalization and profit accumulation the same values that invite resistance to them? Can the norms that impel the active engagement of civil-society groups also impede it?

Notwithstanding these unexplored issues, *People, Profit, and Politics* remains an important contribution to the study of political economy and state-civil society relations, and it also offers an informed assessment of the dominant economic ideology. Comprehensive and demystifying, it stimulates further examination of the Philippine state's convoluted embedment in a global setting buttressed by neoliberal ideals and practices, which results in debilitating domestic industries or sectors. While providing an analysis of hegemonic attempts of international actors, the complicity of local stakeholders, and the merits and limits of popular participation, the authors, as Walden Bello aptly observes in the foreword, also convey the urgency of an alternative economic and political paradigm that could cover genuinely the structural pitfalls engendered by the current one.

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