



Ateneo
School of
Government



**The Partisan Civil Society:
Analyzing Civil Society Engagement in Partisan Politics**

Session 5: What's Next?
10 December 2008, Pacifico Ortiz Hall
Ateneo de Manila University

Summary and Synthesis

By Gladstone A. Cuarteros
Executive Director, RIGHTS Network

Resource Persons

- **Mr. Harvey Keh**
Co-convenor, Kaya Natin, Founder Team RP
Youth Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship Director, AsoG
- **Mr. Ricardo Reyes**
Former Chair, Akbayan! Citizens Action Party
Board Member, Labor Rights and Democracy (LARIDE)
- **Former Governor Josefina 'Josie' dela Cruz**
Province of Bulacan

Main Discussion Questions

1. How to broaden and deepen the constituency for change in the 2010 elections?
2. How to best engage the different publics for a possible united partisan political project in the 2010 elections?
3. What concrete measures can the like-minded reform groups take and what mechanisms can they set-up to ensure coordination and synergy in the 2010 elections?

SUMMARY OF INPUTS

Mr. Harvey Key

- The Filipino youth has critical role in reshaping Philippine politics. Those ages 18-35 years old comprise more than half of the voters in 2010. With this number the youth can vote who will be the next President.

- However many of them are not registered voters yet and many young people do not manage to enter college (8 out of 10).
- The main concerns of the youth are getting education and employment. They seem not to respond well with health and other issues.
- In terms communication, the youth main forms are through : radio particularly FM station; TV; cellphone (texting); and internet-social networking sites. About 20 million Filipinos now have access to internet.
- The youth want bit-size and fast information. In order to influence them and make them more politically active and visible it requires speaking their language. The first step is to inform them first on current events.
- On the question where are the youth, they are involve in:
 - socio-civic involvement: Gawad Kalinga, Pathways to Higher education; Hands on Manila; Kythe; school-based orgs
 - Political activities: Team RP: truth, accountability and reform; Kaya Natin: YPS; Youth wings of political parties: Akbayan and LP
 - University/college : student governments
- There are many other activities youth can participate into, for examples in Team RP they will young voters registration for 2010. In Kaya Natin they are caravans of good governance where the Good Governance Champions were able to talked with thousand of students. Kaya Natin also plans to have text Kaya natin, a Blog Writing competition where young people can write blogs about Kaya natin.
- There are five challenges to address so that we can broaden involvement of the youth.
 1. How can we make politics make more interesting for young people?
 2. How do we make a connection between community activities and political activities?
 3. Young people want to see something concrete because of their efforts.
 4. Many young people ask, is there something that can actually happen if they get involved in politics.
 5. Addressing the cynicism of young people.

Mr. Ricardo Reyes

- Philippine politics is much of sectoral politics which is embedded in wide and deep system patronage controlled by traditional politicians. However, there are also some issue -based participation for example on accountability and anti-corruption.
- The system of patronage has pervaded society deeply especially in urban areas. It is no longer limited to endorsements for employment but politicians have developed a welfare system which is a continuing one.
- Thus the issue is how to involve the basic sector where most of these sectors participate in the system of patronage.
- One is to identify and target section of the basic sectors who are not involve in the system of patronage. A good starting point is the CSO constituencies and also that of progressive political parties.
- Second is the migrant workers – the OFWs. They have vast voting powers, estimated to be about 6 million voters. They are not beholden to traditional politicians.
- Third is the youth but we need to classify them and target those section not yet tied in patronage politics. In urban areas there are youth groups linked to patronage politics.
- After organizing the sectors, there is also a need to build alliances and form mediating organizations, with three demands:
 - Identifying common set of candidates - those people espousing the causes

- progressives believe in, walking the talk so to speak.
- How to save the party-list system because the 2007 elections showed how it was abused plus its internal weaknesses. Party formations that had renege on the goals of equity, participation and accountability should be punished.
- Push for electoral reforms so that cleansing voters registration list will be made.

Governor Josie

- A leader is a function of his time. A lot of leaders when they started have all their noble ideals and visions but through time some of them forgot their ideals because of compromises and desire to win re-elections. Candidates are likened to products they are packaged. The problem is systemic and that leaders with ideals need to adjust to the system.
- For leaders to adhere to good governance there should be a DEMAND from our voters that they want a good leader. Without this demand leaders with ideals will end up eaten by the system.
- A result of the situation where good leader once they get elected forget the noble visions is that people has become distrustful of government. The current administration has corrupted all the institutions.
- The survey shows that people are so frustrated so if that frustration can be translated into a demand then it will an advantage.
- It is true that TV ownership is pervasive and most people get their information from TV. It is an opportunity that advertising people has maximized making a killing during elections.
- Instituting reforms is a long process. We should look at the time-frame when we push for reforms and noble objectives. Elections in 2010 is just 18 month away and that should be considered.
- After this administration strengthening the corrupted institutions is a long haul. Perhaps what we need is a new EDSA.
- The way youth votes is heavily influenced by their parents. The young are not really independent when making their choices but can be dictated upon by their parents. A factor to this is the economic difficulties – the stomach is also important.
- At this point what is needed is strengthening of constituencies and making the people more progressive. We especially the youth who may no longer know Marcos experience, should not lose idealism.

SYNTHESIS OF OPEN DISCUSSION

The facilitator ASoG Dean Antonio La Vina asked each resource person to first make a short reaction on each others input.

Mr. Harvey Keh

- It is true that change won't happen overnight but it would help if a good President can be elected. Filipinos are looking for a good leader in 2010.
- Contrary to what Governor Josie said, many youth want good governance. The experiences in Kaya Natin forum where it usually extends beyond the given time for the

forum shows that young people are hungry of good leaders. Perhaps they are just looking for someone.

Mr. Ric Reyes

- There is a social base for the politics of reform although we are trapped in a traditional political system. The sectors of the youth (those not tied to trapos), OFW and CSO constituencies are the starting points.
- Filipinos need inspirational leadership who can make sacrifices and consistent in their reform ideals.

Governor Josie dela Cruz

- People really want change of leadership come 2010. However, who will that change be will base on how people will vote. Survey shows that people will vote for those who provide for their needs, thus again depends on self-benefit rather than of the country or society.
- Regrading communication, it is really TV and radio. More people are not yet technology updated, except for the youth who are fond of chatting.
- There is a need to influence the media particularly on the content of their program and news. ANC is the only channel now with substance.

Other Points Made

1. Related to the strengthening of institutions, it would be good if the different organizations can identify their contribution so that the group can have picture of the puzzle.
2. One way to appreciate the 2010 election is the power question. CSO should gain power or at least help in electing a reform president or at least a president who can tolerate reform. To do this CS should have the votes because programs is not the basis of negotiations.
3. CS has the capacity to mobilize although it does not have the numbers to elect a president. Another strength of civil society is it purity but this also limits CS capacity to gain power. What can be done is engage a candidate, help shape his/her campaign.
4. On the kind of reform to advocate to a candidate, it need not be long-list. This is thinking through reform within the existing political system where it is easy for candidates to say yes on a long list of reforms from CS but difficult to implement once the candidate is in power.
5. There is a reform constituency. It is estimated to be 45% of voters according to last year's survey.
6. The 2010 elections is very important as it will determine what direction the country will take. An immediate thing to work on is to increase level of confidence that there will no longer be election cheating in 2010. One step towards this is by having a credible voters registration list.
7. Waiting for somebody to come and inspire us will not happen. Building broad and strong constituencies is needed. Another sector to organize is the middle forces.
8. If CSO want to have numbers for the elections, this early it should do two things: 1) base building – so that CS will vote banks; 2) CS to have their own candidates.
9. Regarding the youth, with their number it can be said that repositioning the youth is repositioning the Philippines. The youth should not shy away from politics because it is

- dirty rather they should dirty their hands precisely because the work is unfinished.
10. Making the youth aware is a very good intervention but it should also be clear to the groups working with the youth to have a clear direction on where to lead them. In this way the youth can develop accountable leadership and substantive political education – the right content so to speak. A danger in youth organizing is they end up tied with the patronage system.
 11. Indeed the political system is based on patronage. There is a need to focus on citizenship.
 12. Engaging the media is also critical. Money matters in politics thus influencing the content of information people get from the media would help in educating the people.
 13. Regarding the weakened institutions, it is in fact a challenge and an opportunity to reshape the political system. The current financial crises is likewise an opportunity to reshape economic policy.
 14. Find the connection of local issues to national issues and to personalities. Surveys shows that students can make the connection between an issue and a personality.
 15. The 'feel good' efforts that are non partisan must stream through a united partisan effort. They should add up to united a effort. For now it is alright that the different groups to continue with their partisan initiatives but at some point, the different group come together and decide on a partisan effort. Question of timing is also key.

Local examples of good governance should happen at the national level. The partisan effort could be to support a particular presidential candidate or not. What is important is all groups participating in a united partisan effort should add up to the unity of the group. That is building the constituency that want to make a difference.

16. It was suggested that perhaps the process of convening can be set at the 1st half of 2009. There was no agreement on who will take the lead in convening the groups.

Closing Remarks

The closing remarks was given by Mr. Mirko Herberg, Resident Representative of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. He said he has two impulses in making the closing remarks. One is inspiration and second is that of a restless young German. Inspired because he heard honest and frank assessment of the group. He likewise said he admired the resilience of the participants. Meanwhile the restless young German in him says that participants now need to get their acts together and build a new polity. He suggested identifying what are the issues that the group wants to focus and unite on, and if the groups so decides, to build an organization either a party or not which can facilitate a sustained effort and build compromises rather than a purist.