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still very much vulnerable to criminal and manipulative conduct like inside trading and stock manipulation of those desiring to get rich quick without having to work hard for it but are in positions to do so.

The book is but another addition to the literature dealing with how so much of the country's potentials are betrayed, wasted, and misused by intelligent but unscrupulous individuals who find themselves in power. ❖

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Ms. Glenda Lopez-Wui and Chantana Banpasirichote, editors.  
*Peoples' Initiatives: Engaging the State in Local Communities in the Philippines and Thailand.* Manila and Bangkok: Third World Studies Center and Center for Social Development Studies, 2003. 273 pp.

*People's Initiatives* is an attempt to bring civil society back to its originator before being captured in the rhetoric of international aid development agenda. Contextualizing the discussion within the community where the real initiators of communal initiatives are, the book paints the interventions and innovations by local civic organizations in their struggle to revise, challenge, or reject the development plans charted by the state.

The book eviscerates the declaration that decentralization in Thailand and the Philippines led to a more receptive state-civil society engagement. Six case studies proffer to link democratic theory with practice based on a grounded analysis of ideas, objectives, and empirical case studies of local civil society projects in the two countries.

The common theoretical thread discusses state-civil society engagement in terms of confrontation, cooperation, and cooptation. The book also typocases the factors affecting state-civil society relation in the Philippines and Thailand: (i) an enabling environment, (ii) activist stance of civil society organization, and (iii) civil society's capacity or competence (25).

Exuding variances in the distribution of these factors, the book shows that power relations between state and local civil society in the six localities examined are classic examples of how the state uses the instrumentalities of government to protect and enhance its interest on one hand, and how civil society groups select their means and tactics in pushing for their claim on the other.

Theoretically, local level citizen participation is seen by the contributors as one of the means to balance the power of the state and influence of private capital in governance. In actuality however, what the case studies represent are attempts of concerned, if not victimized citizens to address the issues affecting their respective community.

In the case of Child Watch Phuket, indifference by local authorities to confront the problem of child neglect and abuse in the community resulted in the establishment of a civic unit that coordinate and engage with the state in the aim of addressing the problem. In contrast, the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG) was established by citizens to check on the excesses of local authorities in one of Philippines' poorest provinces.

Collectively and subtly, each of the cases presented argues for and in behalf of those who find the need to civilize the state. The cases of CCAGG, the Mapalad Farmers in Sumilao, and the citizens of Kanchanaburi, reiterate the need to cultivate sympathy and civic consciousness within those in the apparatuses of the state.

Hence, one of the strengths of the book lies in its successful depiction of civil society as part of the strategies and usually, the only effective and reasonable means by citizens to negotiate with the state; to reshape its policy away from the immoderate dictates of the market towards a more equitable, sustainable form of development.

that is becoming even more restricted by the continuous incursion of politics and economy in the sphere of civil society.

And so, one can say that the book fairly reflects — and affirms the “three traditional areas of contested space between the state and civil society groups: use and management of natural resources, public funds, and public services”. With capitalism using the state as its public image as shown by some of the case studies however, this traditional state-civil society bifurcation becomes theoretically and conceptually untenable.

Songco admits that “the state is, in fact, on the defensive and cannot tolerate much progressive action”. This corresponds to the observation that the neo-liberal globalization prescriptions of good governance has led not to enhanced democracy or participation but instead echoes the manifestations of impositions from above and are largely premised on the subordination of democracy to the pursuit of profit.

This declaration leads us to a paradox. Participation has come to be seen as “an affirmative action that protects and advances the right of marginalized groups to become a major and integral part of public decision-making”. In actuality, the six case studies provide us a sad glimpse of a reality by which civil society participation at the local government level is dependent on state recognition, with the latter dependent on the caprices of capital.

In essence, the attempt of *People's Initiatives* to return the discourse of civil society at the level of practical discussion of communal initiatives is commendable, but by limiting the conceptual lenses to the struggle between state and civil society, the book stopped short of patronizing the root cause of this academic and practical engagement in the first place: inequalities caused and engendered by capitalism itself.

When civil society ceases to challenge the state's materialist roots and rests on finding congruence in the state's predetermined set of political and economic coordinates, it also stops imagining that another world is probable. A world where it is still possible to challenge the intolerant, yet habitually accepted world-image that is neo-liberal capitalism. *People's Initiatives* is just one small step towards this re-imagination.

Still, the most important, yet less developed theme relates to the inherent contradiction between democracy and capitalism. *People's Initiatives* raises empirical and normative questions on whether democratization cum decentralization actually helped address issues on equity and participation. It also emphasizes, albeit inadvertently, a unilateral conviction that the struggle for democracy has always been a battle to expand the limited space allotted by the state for citizen participation.

However, when one ponders about the democratic form taken by some countries belonging in the so-called third wave literatures such as the Philippines and Thailand, one is led to the conclusion that democracy in these countries has become nothing but a response to the “global consolidation of competitive capitalism”. Using this perspective, a more complicated picture of civil society-state engagement in Thailand and the Philippines other than that painted in the book emerges.

Pintobtaeng, in his study of relationship between civil society and government in the fishing district of Koyao asserts that approval of destructive fishing methods in the province can only be made possible through exercise of private influence on politics. He concludes that so long as politics favors those who have the capital, the move to reform the fisheries system in Thailand is near impossible.

Tigno, in his study of the participation of private business organizations in Negros Occidental posits that the business sector engages the state only for its own benefit. This makes one cognizant of the prevalence not only of patronage politics but of direct permeation of private capital in local governance. The reluctance of other civil society groups in the province to criticize the private organization engaging in shady dealings with the local government affirms and strengthens the feudal lineage not only of political engagements in Negros Occidental, but even of civic engagement by civil society in the public realm.

These two cases illustrate that with the emergence of capitalism as the dominant socio-political structure in many communities, civil society organizations have had to fight for their place in an already narrow space

By connecting theory to the practical details of communal life, *People's Initiatives* brought the people back in the discourse of civil society. The next step is to fill in the huge gap between the beliefs people profess as *impossible* and the beliefs they hold by default as citizens. The second giant step is for people's initiatives around the world to do away with the people's habits of thoughts and start *re-imagining* civil society as a realm where it is still possible to have alternatives. ❖

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Perlita M. Frago, Sharon M. Quinsaat, and Verna Dinah Q. Viajar.  
*Philippine Civil Society and the Globalization Discourse*. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines, 2004. 143pp.

The rise of civil society in the post-Marcos Philippines not only changed the country's political landscape but also the way politics is understood and studied. Suddenly, papers that have explored the nature, dynamics, and the role played by civil society in the Philippines emerged as scholars grappled with the new political space that it had spawned. However, the advent of globalization and the ramifications it bring requires a new lens with which to analyze civil society and its activities. The Battle of Seattle for one heralded the global activism that we know today and subsequently ushered in a different prism in understanding the relationship between civil society and globalization. Cognizant of this, the book *Philippine Civil Society and the Globalization Discourse* seeks to fill this gap by looking at the perspectives on globalization of selected civil society groups in the country. In brief, it argues, that civil society's response to and understanding of globalization is informed by its specific mandate/thrust, ideological orientation, leadership,

and constituency. Thus, it is this framework that guides the book into its investigation of the globalization and civil society nexus in the Philippine setting.

Perlita Frago, Sharon Quinsaat, and Verna Dinah Viajar of the Third World Studies Center have written a book that both describes and advocates. They find that civil society organizations (CSOs) coming from political blocs are those that consistently articulate on issues that pertain to the political economy of globalization such as those on neoliberalism, liberalization, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the like. For such groups, it is their ideological orientation that greatly influences their mandate and thrust. For those belonging to sectoral organizations, the authors observed that their concerns tend to be those which impact on their specific constituencies such as labor unions and women's groups. Conversely, NGOs that are involved in research and development look to their mandates in responding to issues of globalization rather than on their constituencies.

In analyzing the strategies employed by CSOs, the authors note that 'critical engagement with the state is still deemed fundamental', even as the advent of 'multi-layered governance' has spawned 'new forms of protests' outside of the state. However, they acknowledge that except in agriculture where CSOs are unified against WTO rules and in their struggle against the 'strengthened role of the state along with reforms in existing national policies', 'sustained unity' remains elusive for the CSO community. Notably, their findings point to the fact that 'above all, what has polarized CSOs to a large extent is the fundamental character of the development paradigm that should be pursued and its underlying ideological basis.' Nonetheless, Frago et al. argue that this should not in anyway undermine nor paralyze the efforts initiated by CSOs. Echoing the Gramscian notion of civil society's role, they take on an advocate's stand when they pose a challenge to CSOs that despite their differences, they can still present a viable alternative to the logic of globalization 'in which a cohesive position and practical politics could be advanced.'

As a book based on a study of highly contested concepts (globalization, civil society, and the state), it draws strength from its rich theoretical discourse. The literature review succeeds in contextualizing the study in the theoretical