Community Organising in Transformative Social Work Practice

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Context

The 2014 International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) definition of social work states:

> It is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to Social Work. Underpinned by theories of Social Work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The Social Work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. (IFSW, 2014)

Practitioners recognise that intervention at the community level is another type of social work intervention in addition to those at the individual and group level. Key to this intervention is community organising.

Community organising in professional practice refers to various activities aimed at helping develop communities, challenge unjust systems and policies, and promote interconnectedness among community members (Brady & O'Connor, 2014).

Although community organising is pursued and can only be realised by people, its content, contours, and direction in organising work, in general,

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and social work, in particular, range from progressive to reactionary depend-
ent upon whose interests it should serve. The mainstreaming of community
organising into public consciousness by political forces, non-profit organisa-
tions, and social and mainstream media creates fundamental power shifts in
the methods, directions, and priorities of practice (Brady, Schoeneman, &
Sawyer, 2014).

Community organising in the Philippines started as mutual aid mecha-
nisms set up by local people in the pre-colonial period and was employed in a
number of people's revolts during colonial and neocolonial periods (Manalili,
1984). Since the 1970s it has been incorporated in development work and
in the profession. Community organising was further refined and enriched
using Marxist structural analysis and the thinking of Saul Alinsky and Paolo
Freire (COM, n.d.). Even liberation theology from Latin America influenced
the organising efforts of some churchpeople and institutions. When the prac-
tice of community organising later became part of the anti-dictatorship move-
ment, its history was filled with people's narratives of emancipatory practice
addressing oppressive structures and exploitative conditions. A large part of
the anti-dictatorship movement can be traced back to community organis-
ing. Much of the anti-dictatorship movement helped sustain and advance the
people's revolutionary movement. At any rate political organising had had its
heyday. Community organising showed that it was indeed a potent process in
empowering the people.

Individual social work practitioners also became part of the
anti-dictatorship movement. Some are still members of the revolutionary
movement. Many experienced torture and long periods of detention. A num-
ber died in the struggle. Purificación Pedro was a social work graduate who
endured torture before she was killed. Others who survived the Marcos dic-
tatorship took pioneering and innovative steps that led to building genuine
collective strength of the people.

When the hated Marcos dictatorship was ousted through people power in
1986, President Corazón Aquino restored the so-called democratic space in
the mid-1980s and in so doing a section of the Philippine left was coopted.

With people power instituted via the party-list system and the people's ini-
tiative enshrined in the fundamental law of the land, community development
work in the twenty-first century became a multibillion dollar industry in the
country encompassing practically all areas of social concerns and services. It
evolved into a very complex phenomenon in which players came from both
ends of the political spectrum of Philippine society. This is now referred to
as mainstream development work. Within this ambit "the 'community devel-
opment' approach … under neocolonial conditions, was modified to suit
the objectives of the national government; facilitate control of depressed or
remote areas; persuade the masses to conform to government policies and
goals; and institutionalize a system of patronage anchored on government
bureaucracy … It became a counter-insurgency measure … and emphasized

the involvement of target groups only in the implementation stage of the program/project primarily through the contribution of labor" (NCPD, 1988).

However, the heart and soul of community development is community organising.

At the international level there was a strategic retreat of revolutionary and progressive forces that were supplanted by the neoliberal paradigm. Although the focus of community organising in the 1960s and 1970s was on systematic reforms and transformation, social movements, and building collective power, since the 1980s community organising emphasised collaboration, capacity building, social planning, and working within the system (Brady et al., 2014). Community organising shifting from more critical and radical practice to more conservative approaches led to funded initiatives, community collaborative groups, and tax incentive programmes for small businesses (Defilippis & Saegert, 2012).

Community organising slowly lost its political and progressive content and process only for the politics of cooptation to become the trend.

Research Design

Research design describes recent societal contexts where cooptation and depoliticisation occurred as well as the concepts and practice that have to be reaffirmed for community organising to be truly transformative. The research method used is a systematic review of secondary data that covers critical appraisal, summary, and an attempt to reconcile the evidence. This identified and synthesised all the available research evidence of sufficient quality concerning the topics covered in this study (Victor, 2008).

The methodology follows that proposed by Victor (2008). The first step defines the scope and aim of the chapter. The second step involves searching for and selecting research evidence. Such evidence came from published journals and books. The search and selection processes were tempered by quality appraisal of the limited materials available. The last step involves data extraction and data synthesis.

Hijacking of Community Organising

The hijacking of community organising is a logical consequence of the politics of cooptation. History shows that legitimacy is established through cooptation. Antonio Gramsci described cooptation "as a state in which 'spontaneous consent' is given by civil society to the general direction imposed on social life." Cooptation permits the confinement of class struggle to demands that can be accommodated with existing social relations. It requires the formation and acceptance of a hegemonic ideology that legitimises the new function of the state (De Janvry, 1981). In the case of a state like the Philippines that has long pretended to be the arbiter between contending forces this is not a new function. Such cooptation further buttressed the old political posturing of the state as an adherent and promoter of people's rights.

Since social work has the legitimate and strategic interests of the people at heart it needs to understand how cooptation occurs and how consent should be managed to struggle effectively for a better world (Carroll & Greeno, 2013). In the Philippines cooptation is specially targetted at those who are part of the broad people's movement that rejected long ago the existing system and fought to transform it and build a new one. The overarching objective is to deny progressive forces in their efforts to recruit supporters from the ranks of the people. Riding high on the issue of pervasive poverty the government came up with anti-poverty programmes specifically to lure the victims of poverty who professed allegiance to the other side (people's resistance) back to the government. Some call it building a new social contract between the state and its citizens (Oppenheim, 2012).

Community organising is used to show the exemplary role a civil society plays in linking the people with the government, the delivery of government services, facilitating peace in conflict-torn areas, and taking counter-insurgency measures in hard and recalcitrant rural areas. In the economic realm community organising was employed to facilitate the entry of foreign capital into the country (development aggression), individual and community entrepreneurship to extract social capital from the informal sector, private–public partnerships (PPPs), and get corporations to engage in public relations via corporate social responsibility.

The mushrooming of non-government organisations (NGOs) was no accident intended as it was to supplant mass movements (Petras, 1999). NGOs emphasise projects not movements and mobilise people to produce at the margins and not struggle with controlling the basic means of production (Petras, 1999). NGOs coopt the language of the left with such phrases as "popular power," "empowerment," "gender equality," "sustainable development," and "bottom–up leadership" (Petras, 1999). The problem is that such language is linked to a collaborative framework with donors and government agencies that subordinate activity to non-confrontational politics (Petras, 1999).

When mainstream development work hijacked the concepts and practice of community organising and sanitised it to serve its own purposes, it had difficulty in asserting itself and following its original purpose. Community organising has completely become an instrument and a process in which unequal relations are promoted and legitimacy is rendered to an oppressive and exploitative situation at the community level.

Community organising became almost complete when it moved from the politics of resistance to the politics of cooptation.

DEPOLITICISING COMMUNITY ORGANISING

A key problem for ruling elites seeking to maintain their grip is the apparent paradox of how to maintain legitimacy in an economic system that continually undermines the stated basis of such legitimacy. The problem here

is essentially one of how to maintain enough popular support to guarantee stable rule (Whyte, 2013).

Deception is one of two classical tactics (the other being repression) brought about by the ruling class creating a buffer zone (Kivel, 2006). The ruling class have always wanted to prevent people at the bottom of the pyramid from organising themselves to take power. They are desperate to maintain the power, control, and most importantly the wealth they have accumulated (Kivel, 2006). To maintain the separation and prevent themselves from becoming the object of people's anger they use legal, educational, and professional systems to create a network of occupations, careers, and professionals to deal directly with the rest of the population (Kivel, 2006). Such a buffer zone comprises all occupations that carry out the agenda of the ruling class without requiring the presence or visibility of that class (Kivel, 2006).

The buffer zone has three functions (Kivel, 2006). The first is taking care of people at the bottom of the pyramid. Conventional social work operates within existing social institutions to assist individuals to adjust and adapt to the status quo (George et al., 2013). The second function is keeping hope alive by distributing opportunities for a few people to become better off financially. When economic inequality is high and growing, upward mobility between social classes has to be seen to be attainable. This is achieved by proliferating such messages as "work hard and you'll be rewarded." If these messages permeate to the masses who do not enjoy much of the spoils, then they are more likely to tolerate the riches that a few enjoy within that society (Hill & Kumar, 2009). The final function is to maintain the system by controlling those who want to make changes.

In addition to deception there is depoliticisation. Depoliticisation is when the political content and consideration of any problem, individual, phenomenon, or process is glossed over, hidden, or even denied. People who have disdain for politics even raise it to the level of absurdity by arguing that ordinary people are tired of struggles.

Depoliticisation of the current hegemony was facilitated by neoliberalism. The uprooting of indigenous peoples from their ancestral domains, dispossessing peasants of their land, and eviction of the urban poor from their communities have severely ruptured the connectivity and closeness of individuals, families, and clans. Long-established social relations (before the onslaught of neoliberalism) contributed substantially to building the mass base of legitimate protests and movements in which organising efforts proceeded smoothly in earlier years. Such social relations also provided the so-called infrastructure of dissent via neighbourhood and workplace associations for radical dialogue (Dauvergne & LeBaron, 2014).

Moreover, neoliberalism promotes economic inequality, dependency, and individualistic values all of which can restrict community organising and social change (Brady et al., 2014).

Neoliberalism has negatively impacted community organising in a number of ways such as promoting evidence-based practice (EBP) as the dominant

process to guide professional community practice, decreasing attention on and misrepresenting social movements in the community organising literature and in education, and increasing the professionalisation of community organising (Brady et al., 2014).

EBP is a major force in professional community organising (Brady et al., 2014) and is the direct manifestation and result of post-positivistic values (Brady et al., 2014). When EBP is used, it looks like an attempt is being made to extend a medical model to community organising, social work, and other professions in that it calls on practitioners to identify causal connections between interventions and to alleviate specific problems (Brady et al., 2014). Although EBP provides a worldview on how to arrive at best practice, it fails to address contextual and historical dimensions often at play in community organising or to provide room for radical change and system transformation that are common aims of critical community practice (Brady et al., 2014). Medical models obviously cannot approximate a correct appreciation of how embedded oppression and exploitation unfold or how class contradictions inherent in any community are heightened.

Community organising is currently becoming a sought-after profession or area of practice. It has created a new layer of professional community organisers some of whom profess to be experts or consultants (Brady et al., 2014). This introduces a subtle layer of elitism in which people are made to believe that others are better than they are.

Professionalisation like this impacts community organising because it reshapes how people understand what it means to participate in democracy (Speer & Han, 2018). Many organising campaigns run by consultants and experts are described as a kind of "shallow" mobilising (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016). Such campaigns rarely suggest that the actions of people are linked to social change (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016). What are needed are relational processes that build trust, stimulate the imagination, and develop into collective structures for exercising social power (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016). This includes the need for power analysis that is thoughtful and systematic and that people can conduct themselves (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016).

One problem with outsourcing such work to experts is that some organisers internalise such practices and privileged positions (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016). Professional staff direct, manipulate, and control mobilisation. They see themselves—not the ordinary people—as key agents of change (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016). To them it matters little who shows up or why as long as sufficient numbers turn up for a photo good enough to tweet and maybe generate interest in the media (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016). Although committed activists in the photo play no part in power analysis since they are not told about it or the resulting strategy, they dutifully show up at protests that rarely matter to power holders (Speer & Han, 2018, citing McAlevey, 2016).

Complicating matters further, professional community practitioners and scholars in the field need to question a number of key aspects of the status quo that help maintain the professionalisation of community organising (Brady et al., 2014). Professional community organisers need to question the motivation behind the professionalisation of community organising. They need to question the role that privilege plays in maintaining inequality between professional and non-professional organisers and find out how the systems and institutions we invest in, work for, and belong to through professional membership help to further coopt non-professional community organising to legitimise professional organising (Brady et al., 2014).

The claim made by professional community organisers that they are experts is highly contentious and borders on intellectual dishonesty. Central to community organising is the assertion that people can and should always empower themselves. Organising the work they carry out is central to people's lives and struggles and nobody knows this better than the people involved. The key task of any organiser is to get people to take control of organising their own lives. The best community organisers are those who are no longer needed in the lives and struggles of the people they have helped to organise. When such a situation is reached, it is the organiser's responsibility to move on and find other people in need to organisation.

COMMUNITY ORGANISING IN TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL WORK

Practice is much more than stringing techniques and methods around a theoretical framework. It also reflects and promotes values and beliefs (Bricker-Jenkins, 1997). In other words, every practice model has an ideological core in which ideology is the glue that holds a practice system together and binds it to human conditions, institutions, and practices (Bricker-Jenkins, 1997).

Although social work is not a neutral profession, ideology is inherent to social work values, principles, and commitments and to its theories and approaches (Duarte, 2017). Reshaping and assuming a clear political ideology for social work constitutes a commitment to getting social work to actively participate in political and public arenas (Duarte, 2017). Such commitments are necessary for social workers to represent and speak on behalf of the most vulnerable who fall outside neoliberal normativity such as the poor and homeless, the unemployed, racialised people, women, children and young people, the LGBTQ community, indigenous peoples, the elderly, people with disabilities, and refugees and migrants moving across borders fleeing conflicts and persecution or other life-threatening situations (Duarte, 2017, citing Gray & Webb, 2013; McKendrick & Webb, 2014).

Social workers in the work they do and the commitment they show are human rights workers who advocate individual and collective rights everyday (Lundy, 2011). Human rights are intrinsic to social work and closely

connected to economic, political, environmental, and social forces (Lundy, 2011). Such rights are fought for and realized collectively in community organising.

Community organising at its most elemental is the action of bringing people together and mobilising communities to meet common goals (Hale, 2014). Another definition of community organising is "the process that engages people, organizations, and communities toward increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of life, and social justice" (Hall, 2008). A central feature of community organising is that it is a process and strategy designed to build political power (Hall, 2008).

The basic tenets of transformative social work are moorings wherein community organising can redeem itself and align its practice in building people's organisations and people's movements against neoliberalism and for emancipation. From this framework, community organising can redefine its content, process, parameters for strategic objectives, and specific tactical engagements. Retracing its earlier progressive practices, community organising can ably chart once again its course in developing a comprehensive people's resistance.

Key Role of Raising Political Consciousness

Community organising is both a political act and a political process. It is first of all a political act because it aspires to tilt the balance between the forces of reaction (represented by the ruling class together with the sophisticated arsenal that government bureaucracy entails) and forces for change (the oppressed and exploited sections of society). Organising is geared to tilt the balance between forces that aspire to bring about transformation and change.

Community organising never was, is, or ever will be a neutral activity. Social work together with community organising is a contested and highly politicised practice (Baines, 2011). According to her, "everything is political despite the relatively widespread sentiment that most of everyday life is completely apolitical. For the holders of power, social problems are conventionally understood to be results of individual difficulties and poor decision making rather than unequal distribution of power, resources and affirming identities. They seek solutions by tinkering with the existing social system, applying managerial techniques to most or all social questions, or encouraging individuals to seek medical or psychological interventions for the problems they experience. As we try to bridge practice and social activism, it is important to ask who benefits from the way things operate at any given point in time, who can help make the changes we want, how we can help ourselves and others see the many ways in which issues are political, and how multiple strands of power are operating in any given scenario. At the very core of Social Work's existence are conflicts amongst competing social political groups, forces, and classes over defining needs and how to interpret and meet them."

Raising political consciousness is the process in which people are made to truly and deeply understand the fundamental reasons for their problems by

linking their personal lives with how the system operates. This means taking hold of the forces and structures that cause their misery and deprivation, working out how they operate, and understanding such factors as the commonality of their problems together with those of other oppressed and exploited people; the need for collective struggle; the requirements necessary to fundamentally change the structures, risks, and dangers involved; and the inevitability of success that comes from a mass-based movement. Such a framework allows people to reach a resolution to act that will push them to participate at first gradually and then actively in building people's resistance.

It is only from the conscious conduct of political discussions that advanced elements can be identified from the ranks of the masses. Advanced elements share common traits such as sensitivity to the plight of the people, relative political sharpness, deep-seated interest in progressive ideas, and unceasing pursuit of long-established solutions to the problems of the exploited and oppressed. Political activists will logically emerge from the ranks of advanced elements. Such political activists will assume key and important responsibilities in organising work. This is the process in which organisers motivate others in the community to act in a similar manner and leaders will emerge from the ranks of the organised.

Use of Class Analysis and Centrality of Class Struggle

The proponents of cooptation and collaboration have deliberately buried class analysis and removed class content from community organising. They misrepresent reality by asserting that all communities are homogeneous. Classes exist and class relations operate in highly stratified societies. Community organisers should be able to recognise the different classes, their interests, and corollary standpoints based on such interests. Class analysis will help community organisers identify the most reliable forces, the forces to win over, those to be neutralised, and the target for the main attack. This should all be done in the process of building and strengthening the movement's forces.

Classes are not static economic categories. Rather they are social relations that are in the process of constant change and connected to and affected by other associations (Lundy, 2011). Not all social relations are class relations. However, class affects all social relations such as gender, religion, and ethnicity. They are all relational concepts that are affected by class (Lundy, 2011).

Social workers should always remember that social relations are enacted by human beings and are responsible for the ongoing oppression of many groups and individuals (Baines, 2011). That social relations are enacted by people means that such oppressive relationships can also be changed by people themselves (Baines, 2011). Implicit in the term social relations is that such relations are organised and operated by people. Hence they can be arrested or reorganised by people. They are wholly social relations—not inevitable conditions of modern life that cannot be changed (Baines, 2011).

The history of the world is full of class struggles that have motivated advances in humanity. However, genuine transformation to an ideal society can only be achieved when the masses (the most oppressed and exploited) assume and fulfil their historic responsibility to change the world and rid it of the evil of class.

Arouse–Organise–Mobilise (AOM) Framework

Mainstream social work education is split, on the one hand, *between* casework for social care and community work for social change *and*, on the other hand, a centred generalist model of intervention that is rooted in eclectic knowledge based on systems theory arising from a perspective that is status quo orientated (George & Marlowe, 2005).

However, use of the AOM framework in political organising is strongly promoted and rigorously implemented.

The arousing aspect of AOM relates to leaders of the masses understanding their situation, interests, and roots of their problems; firing them up to promote and fight for their interests; and developing the skills for effective and sustained struggle.

Propaganda work and education work fall within the remit of the arousing aspect. Propaganda work is designed to arouse people and make them aware of a particular situation or issue. The gravity of the situation and its meaning for the people are factors organisers should present, explain, analyse, and get the masses to understand. Depending on the level of work and the situation propaganda can be broken down into various forms. For example, propaganda that explains is called explicative propaganda and propaganda that stirs emotions is called agitational propaganda. Propaganda can range from written (statements, manifestos, briefing papers), verbal (forums, teach-ins, mass meetings, mobile propaganda), cultural (plays, skits, songs, poems, and dance), and informal propaganda such as storytelling and anecdotes.

Education work is designed to deepen understanding on any issue. It involves analysis and systematic, extensive, and structured study in defined courses (specific courses, mass courses, and ladderised courses). Education is pursued to answer a particular need for knowledge/skills of the rallying forces being organised and should be pursued promptly given the requirements involved in organising and struggles.

The organising aspect of AOM relates to gathering and organising people into formal and unified structures. Such structures provide a channel through which individuals can unite to advance and achieve their objectives. Organising is important to consolidating the individual strengths of each member and systematising and directing their movements to a single objective. Two elements of an organisation are developed in the process of organising. One is unity of objective and is based on the condition of the masses and the objective to be understood and nurtured among those being organised. The other is unity in the particular role of the organisation since each

organisation is conscious of its particular condition, its role in society, and its role in social transformation.

The mobilising aspect of AOM relates to an increasing number of people participating in tasks geared toward strengthening the people's movement and advancing struggles in different arenas. The most important objective of mobilisation is to get the masses organised enough to participate in the tasks and activities of the movement. The capacity of the movement to fulfil its tasks and struggles is then immediately raised to a higher level. Getting the masses to act in this way hastens their understanding of politics and organisations by shattering their submissiveness and developing their combative spirit; strengthening their unity by mentally preparing themselves in their collective struggle against misery and in confronting the enemy; sharpening their understanding of their problems, conditions, and struggles and their knowledge of the enemy; highlighting the utmost importance of the collective struggle, the movement and its organisations; heightening their belief in themselves and their combined strength; and shattering individualism in the process.

The AOM framework has its own integrity because the three mutually reinforce each other.

Relationship Between Economic and Political Struggles

Politics in command is a phrase used to indicate that politics itself is relatively dominant when it comes to building a genuine people's movement since it is in the political sphere where different forces (from right to left) are examined and class alignment determined, where political directions are clearly defined, and where tactical leadership is continuously honed. However, politics of every persuasion is detrimental to the movement. Any people's movement should also pay serious attention to the actual needs of its forces to mitigate the devastating effects of the continuing economic crisis by engaging in tactical campaigns to achieve economic demands. Victories from such engagements definitely change class relations between contending forces. Peasants successful in lowering land rent and workers in obtaining an increase in wages slowly change the class relations they have with their oppressors.

Pure economic struggles without the political framework naturally fall into the trap of reformism. This is the character of any type of projects implemented in the community devoid of political framework. Reformism prolongs the life of the system. Community organising aspires to transform the system.

Using community organising to build social movements should have the effect of challenging dominant structures and in some cases mobilising participants to dramatically transform or eliminate such structures altogether. In other words, the concept of community organising should be extended not only to include a greater sustained effort over time, but also examine assumptions regarding the goals of such sustained efforts. Social movements can help chart courses of action and mobilise people to take alternative cultural and

sociopolitical courses of action. They do not need to be restricted to confronting aspects of what currently exists (Brady et al., 2014).

Danger of Localism

A fragmented and superficial understanding of realities on the ground can also lead to unwarranted tactical engagements. Unfortunately, this promotes a model of power that is in harmony with and becomes the basis of such a conceptualisation of participation and empowerment (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). Power resides in individual members of a community and can increase with the successful pursuit of individual and collective goals. This implies that empowerment of the powerless could be achieved within the existing social order without any significant negative effects upon the power of the powerful (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). Such a mindset shows an almost total lack of understanding and critique of the underlying reality and forces of capital, its social relations, its historical development, its imperatives and tendencies, and its conditions of permanent historical crisis in the present period (Wage Slave X, 2002).

There are problems though such as the tendency to essentialise and romanticise the local (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). Another problem is the tendency to view the local in isolation from broader economic and political structures. This means underplaying the context of place such as national and translational economic and political forces (Mohan & Stokke, 2000).

An expression of such localism is the view that an action or an activity by even a small group of people is always more important and always more politically valuable than any political discussion or debate on political positions, orientations, or strategies between fellow militants (Wage Slave X, 2002). Such an attitude exemplifies a hidden—or not so hidden—elitism and vanguardism in that it implies that a small group of people can effect significant social change as opposed to the reality that only mass actions can do so. Under conditions of social passivity of most of the masses the activism of a small minority tends to merely become part of the capitalist political spectacle thus reinforcing the passivity of most of the masses (Wage Slave X, 2002).

A study of political economy will always provide a framework for class relations and class interests. It also provides an understanding of the nature of contradictions as they unfold. Although issues can definitely be resolved at the local level, economic and environmental crises are offshoots of the operations of capital at the international and national level.

Intervention at the local level should also be contextualised within the framework of power relations. There is too much confusion between reforms and revolution. Some community development practitioners assert that "relative transformation" is possible even when necessary changes at the macro level are not quite in place and that "reforms and revolution feed on each other; one forms part of a continuum of empowerment of the people and

communities" (NPS, 1995). Hence either reforms and revolution are mixed up or revolution is seen as the accumulation of reforms (NPS, 1995).

The difference between revolution and reforms is clear. Reforms per se are changes within the context of the existing system, whereas revolution is a change in the system (NPS, 1995). Reforms replicated endlessly do not make a revolution. Reforms by themselves simply "improve" an exploitative system and help it to survive. Genuine revolutionaries know that the struggle for reforms must be deliberately and consciously linked to the struggle to overthrow the system for it to serve the revolution. Revolutionaries engage in the struggle for reforms in pursuit of and not as a substitute for revolution (NPS, 1995).

Social Justice–Oriented Social Work Assists Individuals While Simultaneously Seeking to Transform Society

The problem is not with providing social services, but with all time and energy being diverted toward social services to the detriment of long-term social change (Kivel, 2006). Instead of having an exclusive emphasis on changing individuals, social justice–oriented social work should be used to assist individuals in meeting their needs whenever possible in participatory and transformative ways and simultaneously to focus on challenging and transforming those forces within society that benefit from and perpetuate inequity and oppression. Placing the masses at the centre of a struggle for comprehensive human rights and popular democracy is problematic. Although the masses are not born with some special genes that grant them human rights and popular democracy, the place they occupy in society as it exists today makes the masses the potential force for reorganising society. This dictates the need for organisation, mobilisation, and broadening of political awareness among the popular classes, something that can only be won through struggle (Gutto, 1993).

The exploitative and oppressive relations inherent in Philippine society create a dominant narrative with which social work practice should engage. Understanding the relationship between the socially powerful (the ruling class) and the disenfranchised (the poor, deprived, and oppressed) will always generate a critique connected with class structure and economic division. Structural inequality and oppression are the contexts within which social workers practise their professions. However, if they do not deliberately seek to be part of the solution, then the work they do will inevitably become part of the problem (Ife, 2008). All social workers must therefore incorporate a multidimensional analysis of structural disadvantage in their work. This must be at the forefront of social work thinking at every level of practice (Ife, 2008). Questions on the causes of social problems, how to address them, and how to prevent them are central to the development of a strand of social work emerging from a people's movement and aimed at fundamentally

transforming the political, economic, social, and cultural factors underlying and generating inequality and injustice (Baines, 2011). The need for a people's movement conflicts with the ideals of authoritarianism and neoliberal logic. The promotion and fulfilment of the human right to health, education, housing, and work cannot be a result of transactions in the market.

This calls for the creation or restrengthening of a real human rights movement. Although the state will officially guarantee the rights of the people as enshrined in its constitution, only the people can truly guarantee that their fundamental, democratic, and sovereign rights are respected. The way the system operates and the character of the state has shown "that the struggle even for human rights emanates, is contested and resolved within the relations of contending classes. The struggle for human rights cannot be fully understood and tenaciously fought for the interests of the oppressed outside of class struggle … [For human rights] are products of social interactions and struggle. People's individual and collective initiatives and struggles for their rights do not consider themselves confined to existing international instruments and local laws. The people consider they have the inherent right, and potential power, of creating and extending the frontiers of rights on the basis of their life experiences" (Gutto, 1993).

Community Organising as Part of Building a Broad People's Movement

It is not enough simply to engage in community organising as social work professionals. Social work as a frontline profession should seek unity and chime with people-based movements to bring about political and social transformation. The key task is how to engage service users and carers in political organising and wield such organised strength to support people's resistance. This is necessary for it is only through such a movement that people can build organisational strength, secure tangible victories, and gradually realise their legitimate and strategic interests. Although tangible victories (whether economic or political) by the people are building blocks in nurturing their political power, the need remains for a vibrant and aggressive political movement to provide direction in any tactical engagement. Without making the organic relationship between tactical engagements and strategic objectives clear to the masses and by limiting the fight to specific economic and political issues runs the risk of making the masses focus on the pursuit of rights that can easily be snatched away from them because they would not have secured the necessary political power to defend and expand the rights they have won (Gutto, 1993).

The strong anti-dictatorship movement during the Marcos regime should be seen as a major contribution to the political isolation of the dictatorship and eventual downfall. Similarly, under President Duterte's regime social

workers engaged in transformative social work had the task of helping the people realise that without their participation the struggle to uphold and defend human rights and democracy would be unattainable. The tasks at hand are not simple and involve painstaking work that requires organising, mobilising, and broadening the political awareness of the marginalised. The logic of transformative social work is not that of the market and profit. Its progressive discourse and practice have "the potential to flame the resistance against neoliberalism" including, of course, the resistance against President Duterte's oppressive regime.

CONCLUSION

Education has never been a neutral activity. It is in fact a subversive activity whose primary purpose is liberation.

Liberative education at the community level is complex because the social forces it addresses are complex (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2007). The central purpose is to liberate the individual and society and to distribute liberating power broadly (Freire, 1970). It requires a set of values that include justice and equality to serve as ideals to oppose oppression and authoritarianism and provide a critical understanding of the many cultural cross-currents in contemporary society, mechanisms of manipulation, and hidden ideological purposes (Nelson et al., 2007). Liberative education and critical pedagogy uncover myths and injustices evident in the dominant culture (Nelson et al., 2007). They also embrace the expectation that the powerless can develop power through education (Nelson et al., 2007). This once again requires recognising that forms of knowledge are not neutral but utilised by the dominant culture to secure its power (Nelson et al., 2007).

Community organising must become once more the place where conflicts of humankind are examined in increasing depth to understand the ideological and cultural bases on which societies operate. The purpose is not merely to recognise such conflicts or ideologies, but to engage in actions that constrain oppression and expand personal power (Nelson et al., 2007).

There is a need for social work educators, mentors, and practitioners "who exercise forms of intellectual and pedagogical practice which attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that communities represent both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. This also refers to one whose intellectual preferences are necessarily grounded in forms of moral and ethical discourse exhibiting a preferential concern for the suffering and the struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986).

At the end of the day theories are best understood in the crucible of practice and practice is always the final arbiter of truth.

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