

THE FIGURE OF THE 'FIL-WHATEVER': FILIPINO AMERICAN TRANS-PACIFIC SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE RISE OF RADICAL COSMOPOLITANISM

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Abstract

In this article I focus on diasporic social movements – sites where the cultural becomes political. Drawing upon the specific case study of Filipino American activists in the San Francisco Bay Area, with whom I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in 2007, I will examine contending practices of transnational activism vis-à-vis the Philippine 'homeland' and will endeavour to bring to light the ways in which these practices (and the epistemologies informing them) have been changing in line with the rise of globalisation. I will identify, in particular, three principal cultural-political imaginaries which have emerged at different points in time within the changing global context: 'diasporic pan-nationalism', 'diasporic internationalism' and 'diasporic cosmopolitanism'. I will suggest that the former two were understandable responses to the changing global context, but that only diasporic cosmopolitanism has succeeded in becoming an imaginary wholly contingent in contemporary realities. After establishing this argument, I will take a more philosophical tack and zoom in a little closer on the question of radical cosmopolitan identity. In particular, I will examine the possibility of new forms of belonging that do not hinge on sameness; that is to say, on reductive, nationalistic essences. Here I will theorise the figure of the 'Fil-Whatever', drawing upon Giorgio Agamben's (1993, pp. 18-19) philosophical concept of 'whatever', which he uses to denote an 'inessential commonality'; that is, 'a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence'. My contention is that diasporic Filipinos need not be condemned to static identity formulations such as 'Filipino Australian' or 'Filipino American', nor need they see themselves as merely inauthentic copies of their 'authentic' counterparts in the homeland, but can converge instead in new forms of non-

absolutist, anti-essentialist, cosmopolitan belonging.

Globalising processes have radically altered the terrain on which forces of contestation operate. Social movements, once confined to national territories, are now expanding globally in line with the mass emigration of peoples outside of their home countries, as well as in recognition of the hyper-extension of capital beyond nation-state borders. Wherever people move, new webs of affect are woven and new emotional geographies are created. People's political affinities become transformed and reconfigured accordingly. Many migrants stay involved in the politics of their country of origin, even at a distance, while others choose to involve themselves in the politics of their new host societies instead. Others, meanwhile, find ways to balance both, seeing the interconnectedness of national politics within the new globalised environment - a fact which dovetails with their own life experiences as migrants straddling both worlds, constructing new solidarities across oceans through their everyday practices.

My interest here, then, is in diasporic social movements – sites where the *cultural becomes political*; where the complex cultural identities that emerge out of the diasporic experience come to inform activist epistemologies and modes of political engagement in the world. In this article, I draw upon the specific case study of Filipino American activists in the San Francisco Bay Area of the United States (with whom I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in 2007) to examine their contending practices of transnational activism vis-à-vis the 'homeland'; namely, the Philippines. I will endeavour to bring to light the ways in which their epistemologies have been changing in line with the rise of globalisation, identifying, in particular, three principal cultural-political imaginaries which have emerged at different points in time within the changing global context: 'diasporic pan-nationalism'¹, 'diasporic internationalism' and 'diasporic cosmopolitanism'. Each of these will be elaborated upon through the course of this article, but it will first of all be necessary to elucidate the way in which I understand the notion of the imaginary².

¹ This has alternatively been theorised as 'transnational nationalism' (Kastoryano cited in Dufoix 2008, p. 94) or as 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1998, pp. 58-74).

² It must be noted that my use of this term has nothing to do with the manner in which it is employed in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Rather, it is derived in part from Édouard Glissant's (1997) usage, coupled with insights gleaned from Murray Gell-Mann's (1994) theory of 'complex adaptive systems'.

Imaginaries are schemata or lenses through which the world is understood. They are selective interpretations of reality, distilled from the wider context of which they are a part. Once formed, however, they significantly impact the ways in which people act in and upon the world, with distinct practices flowing on from each. Thus, imaginaries are both 'context-driven' and 'context-generative' (Appadurai 1996, pp. 182-188). They arise out of particular contexts at particular spatio-temporal junctures, with activists drawing upon them to serve specific needs immanent to the context. When the context changes, however (as it always does), some imaginaries become rendered redundant. This does not mean that they cease to exist or to wield significant influence. Nevertheless, a disconnect arises between ideology and lived experience. The world becomes moulded to fit the theory, rather than theory being moulded to fit the world. I will argue in this article that, in the context of Filipino American trans-Pacific activism, diasporic pan-nationalism has become anachronistic in precisely the sense articulated here. I will hence proceed to look at the new imaginaries that have emerged to challenge it (ones more consonant with their times): diasporic internationalism in the mid-1970s and diasporic cosmopolitanism in the late 1990s. Each has arisen not at the expense of older epistemologies, but alongside them, creating an enriched, more polyphonous activist milieu, full of tensions and contradictions that are still working themselves out. The objects of my inquiry are precisely these multiple, intersecting, and contending forces, all of which have an endlessly shifting relationship with each other.

After examining each of the three cultural-political imaginaries discussed above, I will conclude on a somewhat philosophical note, zooming in on the diasporic cosmopolitan imaginary and drawing upon aspects of my fieldwork to theorise radical cosmopolitan identity. In particular, I will seek to address the following questions, each of which underlie the article as a whole: Should diasporans be seen as merely 'derivative'; that is, as inauthentic copies of their 'authentic' counterparts in the homeland? What would a diasporic Filipino identity not based on 'lack' look like? What possibilities might there be for diasporans to achieve a sense of belonging that does not hinge on sameness; that is to say, on reductive, nationalistic essences? Should 'belonging' always necessarily imply homogeneity? In addressing these questions I will theorise the figure of the 'Fil-Whatever', arguing that diasporic Filipinos need not be condemned to static identity formulations such as 'Filipino Australian' or 'Filipino American', nor need they see themselves as derivative or deficient vis-à-vis

the homeland, but can converge instead in new forms of non-absolutist, anti-essentialist, cosmopolitan belonging. Here I will draw upon Giorgio Agamben's (1993, pp. 18-19) notion of 'whatever', which he uses as a philosophical concept to denote 'inessential commonality'; that is, 'a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence'.

Diasporic Pan-Nationalism

The tradition of Philippine revolutionary nationalism is as old as the Philippine nation-state itself, becoming as it did a galvanising force in the struggle for independence against Spanish rule. As Eduardo Gonzalez (2000, p. 1) writes, 'the nationalist agenda has provided Filipinos of various social classes and ethnic backgrounds with a positive sense of collective identity and belonging.' Filipino activists again called upon the revolutionary nationalist mythology that arose out of, and in resistance to, the historical experiences of colonialism, in the postcolonial period; most notably during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Largely in response to an insurgent civil society that was everywhere threatening his power, Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972 and maintained an iron grip on the Philippines right up until he was deposed in the People Power Revolution of 1986. During the period of Martial Law, Marcos abolished congress, took over the media, monopolised military power, and imprisoned thousand of dissenters without charge or trial, many of whom were tortured and murdered (Gaerlan 1999). All the while, his regime enjoyed the unwavering support of the United States (US).

Very early on, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) – and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA) – became the backbone of the popular struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. It was guided by a distinctly Marxist-Leninist-Maoist brand of revolutionary nationalism, adapted by Amado Guerrero³ to the Philippine context in his seminal *Philippine Society and Revolution* (2005 [1970]). 'As a school of revolutionary theory which served to successfully seize state power', writes Helen Toribio (2000, p. 41), 'Maoism was a model that Third World liberation movements could emulate'. It was Mao Zedong who first radically revised Marxism so that it became defined not only by the contradictions between proletarian and bourgeois *classes*, but also by those between proletarian and bourgeois *nations* (Zizek 2007, p. 2). A space for nationalist struggle, and not just class struggle,

³ This is the *nom de plume* of Jose Maria Sison who founded the CPP in 1968.

was hence carved out⁴. Maoism was thus readily received in the Philippine context, with the anti-Marcos movement characterised as much by its opposition to Marcos' imperialist backers (the US), as by its opposition to Marcos himself. The struggle was therefore carried out, not solely in the name of the Philippine proletariat or peasantry, but also in the name of the Filipino people as a whole⁵.

Overseas Filipinos played no small part in this struggle, with San Francisco, California emerging as one of the most important nodes in the diaspora. The Filipino presence in California has a long history; one inextricably tied up with the story of US imperialism. The US annexed the Philippine Islands from Spanish control in 1898, beginning an almost fifty-year long colonial occupation. As early as 1906, even in the midst of the Philippine-American War, the US began recruiting and transporting thousands upon thousands of indentured Filipino labourers to work on plantations in Hawaii and California. Later, the Great Depression of the 1930s sparked a wave of xenophobic reforms in the US. In 1934, the Tiddings-McDuffie Act was passed, slowing all further immigration from Asia to but a trickle, as well as precluding those Asian immigrants who stayed from ever being able to attain citizenship. This was the beginning of a period of isolation and exclusion for Filipino American communities, which did not end until thirty years later with the passing of the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act which overturned all past restrictions on Asians (Dufoix 2008, p. 47).

After 1965, Filipinos began migrating to the US on a large scale once again, including a significant number of political exiles escaping persecution under Marcos, both in the lead up to, and following, the declaration of Martial Law⁶. One of those to flee the repression in the early stages was Cynthia Maglaya

⁴ What became buried in this new formulation was Marx and Engel's earlier assertion in *The Communist Manifesto* (1992 [1848], p. 23) that '[t]he working men have no country'.

⁵ For an astute critical analysis of the concept of 'the people', see Hardt and Negri (2006, pp. 79-91, 99-102).

⁶ Filipino exiles in the US are reported to have totalled around 15,000 over the fifteen-year period of the dictatorship (Gaerlan 1999, p. 95). Benito Vergara (1999, p. 136) has sagely pointed out the contradictory nature of this state of affairs: the fact that these activists-in-exile rightly railed against US complicity with the Marcos regime on the one hand, yet simultaneously sought protection from the US on the other.

– a young, energetic organiser who had cut her activist teeth in the *Kabataang Makabayan* (Patriotic Youth), a Maoist student organisation formed in 1964 which later merged into the CPP. In the US, Maglaya subsequently went on to become one of the founders of what Toribio (2000, p. 31) called ‘the most organized leftist institution in the history of the Filipino American community’; namely, the *Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino* (KDP), or, Union of Democratic Filipinos⁷. According to one of her former comrades,

Cynthia’s greatest influence and contribution within the KDP was her ability to bridge the political and cultural differences between recent immigrants and Filipino Americans. She laid the cornerstone that allowed us to build a truly integrated organization of Filipino immigrants and Filipino Americans (Habal 2000, pp. 201-202).

The KDP, founded in 1973 and headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area, was thus formed out of the merging of two currents from either side of the Pacific: immigrants from the Philippines and Filipino Americans who were born and raised in the US, but who nevertheless became drawn into the struggle through an ongoing emotional connection with what they considered to be their homeland (Gaerlan 1999; Toribio 2000; Choy 2005). Upon its formation, the KDP’s overriding priority was to organise the local US opposition to the Marcos regime in the Philippines. In these early years, according to Barbara Gaerlan (1999, p. 83), the KDP not only shared the CPP’s revolutionary nationalist orientation, but was even mandated by the CPP to be its *de facto* representative in the US. Up until the mid-1970s, the KDP looked to the Party as its principal source of political analysis. Reading groups proliferated up and down the West Coast of the United States, in which the canonical works of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism were collectively studied and reflected upon, along with the writings of CPP founder, Jose Maria Sison.

Although nationalist in character, the KDP’s location in the diaspora rendered its politics a curious form of ‘transnational nationalism’ or what I refer to in this article as ‘diasporic pan-

⁷ In what is perhaps testament to the KDP’s strength, Ferdinand Marcos even went so far as to contract out the assassination of two KDP-affiliated labour leaders, Gene Viernes and Silme Domingo. ‘[A] Seattle court found in 1989 [that] the Marcos regime was directly responsible [for these murders]’ (Gaerlan 1999, p. 89).

nationalism'. According to this perspective (one very much promoted by the CPP), diasporans did not have an independent identity of their own, but were peninsular extensions of the greater Philippine nation. The Party, in this way, was able to reinscribe émigrés and second- and third-generation Filipino Americans back into the national fold, thereby demanding their allegiance to the nationalist revolution. This was precisely how the CPP was able to reconcile its nationalist ideology with emergent globalising tendencies that posed a threat to nationalist thought and practice. The KDP's role, as far as the CPP was concerned, was solely to act as a support organisation for the revolutionary struggle in the Philippines. The issues affecting the lives of diasporic Filipinos in the US context did not matter. What was required instead was that diasporans suspend their own local political concerns (for education, for affordable housing, against racial discrimination and the like), so as to completely dedicate themselves to the struggle in the homeland.

Inevitably, contradictions began to emerge in the ranks of the KDP as the pan-nationalist imaginary that the CPP had imposed upon it was increasingly unable to account for its member's own lived experiences. Carol Ojeda-Kimbrough (cited in Choy 2005, p. 295), for example, was forced to reflect: 'Am I a Filipino first or a Filipino American? Where do my loyalties reside – in my country of birth or in the country of my residence?' Although in the early years 'the Philippine work did dominate KDP's organizing' (Toribio 2000, p. 38), Filipino American activists within the organisation soon began to take up issues of relevance to their own subject positions as marginalised diasporic people within the United States. A new imaginary was stirring – or, rather, an imaginary which had lain latent due to the immediate and pressing concerns around the dictatorship in the Philippines, was beginning to come to the fore.

Diasporic Internationalism

Through the course of the 1970s, the uneasy relationship between KDP activists' lived realities and the epistemological perspective that had been demanded of them by the CPP grew more and more untenable. No longer content with mere 'support work' for the struggle in the homeland, the KDP attempted to adjust its practice to more adequately address their own concerns within the US, *in addition* to their concern with toppling the Marcos regime in the Philippines. In Gaerlan's (1999, p. 80) words, it combined a 'concern for the Philippines with a domestic agenda of anti-racist

and eventually pro-socialist domestic organizing'. This strategy of support for both the Philippine nationalist revolution and the US proletarian revolution was known in the KDP as the 'dual line' programme (Toribio 2000; Habal 2000; Choy 2005). The KDP's dual allegiances were perfectly reflected in its newspaper, *Ang Katipunan*, the pages of which were filled with headlines from both the Philippines and the US: news about the progress of the revolutionary struggle in the homeland, as well as around the domestic issues that KDP were involved in – struggles for low-income housing, educational reform, immigrant rights, labour rights, affirmative action, and so on (Vergara 1999; Choy 2005).

In truth, the KDP's dual allegiances were more or less implicit in its imaginary from the beginning, but local concerns had been subsumed in the early years by the urgent demands of organising support against the dictatorship. By the mid-1970s, however, the KDP leadership was beginning to assert the dual line anew, a position which put them at odds with both CPP cadres in the Philippines as well as with many of their own members in the US. Debates raged within the organisation around the question of whether or not Philippine work should have primacy. Helen Toribio (2000, p. 38), herself a participant in these debates at the time, recalls some of the points of contention that were raised:

Having a dual program meant objectively participating in two separate revolutions, the Philippines and the US. Could a "revolutionary mass organization" like the KDP realistically consider itself as a part of two revolutions? Shouldn't one revolution take precedence over the other? And since the Philippine revolution was more advanced (i.e. having a vanguard party in the Communist Party of the Philippines and a strategy), compared to the US (having no singular vanguard and no unified strategy), then shouldn't Philippine work have primacy within the KDP?... If the Philippine work had priority, then how should the KDP view the fast-growing Filipino community in the US? Given the increasing influx of immigrants from the Philippines, should the KDP view the community as an "overseas" constituent of the Philippines? Or, did an immigrant population settling into American communities and integrating into the workforce mean it was principally a US constituency?

In essence, what was at stake were two contending imaginaries: A *pan-nationalist perspective* which held that diasporic Filipinos

were merely overseas constituents of the Philippines, and an *internationalist* perspective which asserted that diasporic Filipinos were constituents of both the US *and* the Philippines. In 1975, in the midst of the debates over the dual line, the Chicago chapter of the KDP (mostly made up of recent immigrants from the Philippines) actually split with the rest of the organisation, over its disagreement with the leadership that local issues should be afforded any equivalence with Philippine issues. According to Gaerlan (1999, p. 85), '[t]hey objected to being asked to do organizing around domestic labor or other social issues in the United States', seeing themselves not so much as part of the US working class, but rather, as overseas nationals of the Philippines. After some intense discussions, however, 'the chapter was reintegrated – with the dual line in tact' (Toribio 2000, p. 38).

Although the KDP was able to reconcile internal differences within its ranks, it was increasingly unable to reconcile its differences with the CPP. In contravention of Party dictates, the KDP insisted on its dual line strategy and became more and more involved in issues that focussed on the rights and livelihoods of Filipino Americans within the US. In this, KDP members were inspired by the insurgent cultural nationalisms that surrounded them, such as those associated with the Chicano and Black Power movements. As Estella Habal (2000, p. 199) writes,

the ideas of Black Power had influenced many of us who were willing to listen. We owe a debt to black people in this country who opened the doors for us. Minority peoples became empowered... We began to understand the role of racism and the inferiorization of Third World peoples.

Hence, no longer did diasporans only see themselves as overseas Filipinos but, increasingly, also as racialised minorities within the US. The question of race was incorporated into KDP's class analysis becoming one of the core issues of its socialist programme (Choy 2005, p. 299). This shift represented yet another significant departure from CPP ideology.

International developments also created further schisms between the CPP and KDP. The revolutionary war of independence in Angola, supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba, was opposed by both the US and apartheid South Africa. The US, concerned with containing the spread of communism within the context of the Cold War, lent material support to anti-independence forces. China's animosity towards the Soviet

Union after the Sino-Soviet split forced it into the paradoxical position of being a strange bedfellow of the US. For the KDP, what was imperative was to oppose US imperialism. For the CPP, in contrast, what was important was to back Maoist China no matter what. In 1978-79, the KDP was further alienated from the CPP over the issue of China's support for the genocidal Pol Pot regime in Cambodia (Toribio 2000, pp. 42-43). Owing to these and other events, the KDP gradually came to a complete rejection of its Maoist origins.

The ideological schism between the KDP and CPP that first emerged in the mid-1970s over the question of the dual line, eventually became an unbridgeable chasm. By the early 1980s, the two organisations had severed ties completely. After the split, the CPP was left without a support organisation in the US. As such, Party representatives were sent to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1983 to help re-establish a Maoist presence, loyal to the CPP. There was no question of being a part of two revolutions or of choosing between one and the other. Instead, Filipino Americans were urged to fully dedicate themselves to the People's War in, and for, the homeland. The Alliance for Philippine Concerns was eventually established as a result of these efforts in 1986 (Gaerlan 1999).

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Pacific, the Marcos regime was fast coming to an end. A military mutiny that was accompanied by a popular albeit bloodless uprising managed to topple the dictatorship in 1986. The CPP and NPA, despite having mobilised thousands of people on countless fronts for over a decade, were largely absent from these developments. This came as a surprise to many, not least of all to CPP members themselves, who had long seen themselves as the vanguard of the movement. In adherence with Maoist orthodoxy, the CPP-NPA's focus was guerrilla war in the countryside, and yet the popular uprising that had finally swept Marcos from power had taken place in urban Manila. The KDP viewed the CPP's absence in the midst of the People Power revolution 'as the consummate error of [its] adherence to Maoism' (Toribio 2000, p. 43).

The history of the relationship between the KDP and the CPP is extremely revealing. Amongst other things, it is a history of the tension between two imaginaries; between a nationalism that attempted to reconcile itself with emergent globalising tendencies in a way that left its fundamental epistemological assumptions in tact (thereby simply morphing into a nationalism-writ-large), and a new *diasporic internationalism* that was making some tentative,

first attempts to grapple with the new challenges posed by the shifting global context. KDP activists were forced to critically reflect upon their own subject positions and to revise their cultural identities and political frameworks accordingly. The intensifying interconnectedness of the world meant that sedentarist notions of belonging became increasingly untenable, along with all nationalist political projects based on such notions. An internationalist vision was what made the most sense to the majority of KDP activists at the time. It was an imaginary distilled from their lived experiences as transnational actors.

However, while the KDP's dual line was no doubt an extremely important innovation, representing as it did an early intimation towards a renewed cultural politics unmoored from rigid and anachronistic notions of belonging, it is important to point out its limitations. KDP activists had 'rejected the "overseas" characterization of the Filipino American community as an indication of [the CPP's] narrow nationalism' (Toribio 2000, p. 38), but nevertheless left the modernist global imaginary unchallenged; one which saw the world only in terms of a patchwork of discrete nation-states. Thus, either way, the limiting factor remained what Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2002) have called 'methodological nationalism' and what Paul Gilroy (1993, p. 5) has equivalently described as 'the unthinking assumption that cultures always flow into patterns congruent with the borders of essentially homogenous nation states'. The KDP's solution to the diasporic dilemma was to demand the right to multiple allegiances, but what they failed to do, however, was to more fundamentally call into question the very nation-state framework that processes of globalisation were radically reconfiguring before their eyes. To be fair though, this was back when the phenomenon of 'globalisation' was as yet unnamed, with tendencies towards global integration still only in their incipient phases. The continuing proliferation of supranational social ties since the 1970s, however, has since rendered the modernist idea of the world increasingly redundant. The contradictions between ever-shifting material realities and received cultural-political imaginaries that KDP activists were forced to grapple with in the 1970s, have only further intensified in the present era. This intensification has prompted Filipino nationalist scholars like Eduardo Gonzalez (2000, p. 2) to ask the tough questions: 'In the wake of the seemingly unstoppable advance of globalization, is the nationalist project dead? Is Filipino nationalism in a tailspin, going into a deep intellectual slump?' While both pan-nationalist and internationalist politics remain influential for many activists in

the Filipino diaspora, there are new imaginaries emerging which go well beyond modernist commitments to the nation, regardless of whether these are to one, two, or many nations.

Diasporic Cosmopolitanism

While processes of globalisation do not necessarily guarantee the emergence of cosmopolitan dispositions, they do constitute much of the raw material for their possibility. Hence, while globalisation has elicited in some activist groups a fundamentalist response (the CPP, for example, continues to affirm its classical ideology in the face of new constellations of power, insisting that nothing has changed⁸), it has prompted other groups to seriously grapple with the changing world-historical context and to formulate new imaginaries more in consonance with the times. The KDP's dual line represented an early attempt to do just this. With the intensification of globalisation since the 1970s, however, even internationalist imaginaries have become somewhat anachronistic. The KDP ran out of steam after Marcos was deposed, and with members exhausted after a long struggle, the organisation decided

⁸ By the early 1990s, the CPP was in a serious crisis. Domestically, it had become a marginal force after failing to participate in the 1986 insurrection that toppled Marcos. This precipitated a number of internal debates around strategy. The immediate post-Marcos period also saw tragic purges of dissident Party members, under the pretence of weeding out 'deep penetration agents' of the state (Garcia 2001). Internationally, the end of the Cold War and the intensification of globalisation stoked further debates about the way forward for the Party. In the midst of all of this internal disarray, CPP chairman Jose Maria Sison, writing under the pseudonym of Armando Liwanag (1992), intervened with an internal position paper in which he proclaimed that the reason the Party was in crisis was because it had deviated too far from the original principles upon which the CPP was founded in 1968. For Sison, what was needed was not to update Party ideology and strategy to more adequately deal with new circumstances (which is what many members were calling for), but instead to reaffirm the original principles of 1968. This now-infamous document directly led to mass splits, with a reported two-thirds of the membership choosing to leave the Party, rejecting both Sison's leadership and Maoist ideology as a whole. Those who stayed became known as 'reaffirmists' (RAs) and those who left became known as 'rejectionists' (RJs). This split has forever altered the landscape of the Philippine Left, with animosities between RAs and RJs still evident everywhere today – animosities which have since been reproduced in the diaspora.

to disband itself in 1987. New social movement organisations have since emerged within the Filipino diaspora, with one such group being the Filipino/American Coalition for Environmental Solidarity (FACES). During my ethnographic research visit to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2007, FACES emerged as one of the key organisations in my work. I spent much time participating in their various activities – meetings, rallies and the like – as well as simply having coffee and chatting with individual members on an informal basis. What impressed me about FACES was the theoretical framework which guided its practice; one which was evidently both post-nationalist – evidenced by its slogan ‘Building environmental justice across borders’ (Carlos & Tilos 2007) – as well as post-*internationalist*. Before elaborating upon FACES’ novel imaginary, however, some historical background will first of all be required.

FACES was launched in February of 2000, with its founding objective being to support the environmental justice struggles of communities in the Philippines affected by toxic waste left behind at former US military bases in Pampanga and Zambales provinces. These bases had first been established in the early 1900s, during the period of US colonial rule. With the signing of the Treaty of Manila in 1946, the Philippines was granted formal independence from its American colonisers, albeit not without a number of strings attached. One of these was the right for the US to retain use of its military bases, which were of vital strategic importance in the Cold War context with the US seeking to contain Soviet influence in the Asia-Pacific region. Amongst other things, the bases played a key role in the United States’ wars in Indochina throughout the 1970s. Ferdinand Marcos remained a key ally of the US throughout this period. After the demise of the Marcos dictatorship, however, a spirit of reform was in the air. Many Filipinos resented the US presence in the Philippines, not to mention the fact that the US had backed a brutal dictator under whom they had suffered immeasurably. As such, lawmakers that took office after the restoration of democracy were charged with a new mandate. In 1991, the Philippine Senate voted to reject the US-Philippines bases agreement, and in 1992 US forces formally withdrew.

By an accident of history, the massive 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo that had devastated surrounding communities, also caused extensive damage to US military facilities. This devastating event occurred just three months before the historic Senate decision to oust the bases took place, and no doubt contributed to the US military’s eventual willingness to close down its Philippine

operations. In fact, the US left in haste, neglecting even to clean up hazardous waste from their facilities. Jorge Emmanuel (1997, p. 3), himself a member of FACES, writes of the dangerous by-products produced by US military activity:

Most people associate toxic waste solely with industry. However, military facilities and operations also generate large quantities of hazardous waste from production, testing, cleaning, maintenance, and use of weapons, explosives, aircraft, naval vessels, land transport, etc... Toxic solvents, oils, greases, corrosives, fuels, heavy metals, PCBs, dioxins, unexploded ordnance, and radioactive material are some of the hazardous wastes emitted or discharged directly into soil, air, or water by the military.

Not long after the US withdrew from their bases, nearby residents began to complain of a whole series of health problems, including gastrointestinal disorders and skin rashes (Emmanuel 1997). What followed revealed multiplying instances of cancer and children born with deformities. These illnesses were found to be connected with toxic military waste which had contaminated the local water supply (Tritten 2010). Not only were the local people victims of Pinatubo, but also of a new human-made disaster. In the years following the surfacing of these issues, the People's Task Force for Bases Clean-up (PTF) was formed in the Philippines, along with the United States Working Group for Philippine Bases Clean-Up (USWG) on the other side of the Pacific. Many of the activists who became involved in the campaign had come directly out of the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. As such, old trans-Pacific networks were mobilised. What was new, though, was that it was now the environment that was on the agenda. Of course, it was an environmentalism inextricably tied up with issues of social justice, not least of all, human health and liveable communities. The USWG was the kernel that eventually grew into FACES.

In the early 2000s, not long after FACES' founding, the PTF, for all intents and purposes, collapsed, with the bases cleanup campaign as a whole soon following suit. A full explanation of the complex set of circumstances that led to this occurrence is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that, the campaign had already been facing flagging fortunes for some time before PTF members decided to turn on each other. With the implosion of the PTF, FACES were left without a partner organisation in the Philippines with whom to work. This

thrust FACES members into a period of deep reflection around their work. In 2004, a 'comprehensive assessment process' was launched 'that employed participatory methods for building capacity and strategy around FACES' potential future direction' (FACES 2005). It was hoped that the reassessment process would reinvigorate the organisation and charge it with a new sense of purpose. Most of all, participants in the process wanted to make sure in their own minds that FACES still had reason to exist. They wanted to be clear about the specific role they could play as diasporic Filipinos, and were weary about not reproducing the shortcomings of other attempts at trans-Pacific organising. Although keen to draw lessons from the past, FACES members were not content with received ideas about the world. Instead, they set out to collectively forge their own imaginary, actively grappling with the new challenges of the changing world-historical context and its implications for their work.

A period of reassessment took place over the course of two years, during which time many in-depth discussions were held. FACES' members started with very personal questions about their own identity and positionality as Filipino Americans: How was the Filipino American community to be understood? What role could or should the Filipino American community play as far as in issues in the Philippines were concerned, if any? If Filipino Americans had their own unique identity and were not just peninsular extensions of the homeland, how could they go beyond mere support for struggles in the Philippines and also become their own constituents; participants, that is, in their own liberation, and not just that of others? Was it ethical to claim oneself as a representative of another's struggle in the first place? What was the connection between issues that Filipino Americans faced and issues that Filipinos in the Philippines faced? Indeed, these were questions that often came up in Filipino American activism, but FACES felt it was necessary to revisit them and to probe them in a deeper and more systematic way.

From there, FACES members then began to reflect upon bigger questions surrounding the nature of the global present. What is different about today's context that requires a rethinking of past imaginaries? Exactly what has changed since the 1970s? In a presentation on the notion of 'transnational environmental justice' that I recorded at the 2007 FACES National Conference

in Oakland, Miguel⁹, a veteran of the anti-martial law movement, reflected on the profound shifts he has seen over his lifetime:

I've been now engaged in Philippine support and solidarity work for about twenty-four years... So part of it is trying to reflect on, you know, where I've been in this work, and trying to reflect on what's different now from twenty-four or twenty-five years ago... How, in fact, are experiences of our communities different from twenty-four years ago till now, that will have some impact and some bearing on that type of work that we try to do?... What are some of the trends that have happened that have in fact accelerated in the past twenty-five years?... The income gap between countries has accelerated dramatically... Debt has been a part of the strategy of accelerating and maintaining the disparity between communities and between countries... migration has exploded... globalization^[10] has allowed companies and governments to rule over the world... Advances in technology and communications really strengthens communications between communities and allows for more meaningful exchanges... The ability to have a phone thing and a video thing was unheard of twenty years ago. We were still waiting for the fax to spit out paper, and we were lucky to get the fax to spit out paper; that in fact this technology makes, truthfully, kind of the distance come closer... And for an organization like FACES we should, I think, kind of really embrace that and try to maximize the impact of that in our work, much more than we've currently done...

The reflections of movement veterans like Miguel of course came into play during FACES' long period of reassessment. In fact, valuable lessons were drawn from their experiences in the anti-martial law movement and other struggles, with FACES now even defining itself as an 'intergenerational' organisation – an explicit valorisation of the sense of continuity and historicity

⁹ Note that interlocutors in my research are only referred to here by pseudonyms, not by their real names.

¹⁰ I have transcribed the recorded speech of my research informants in the US with standard US spelling, in line with particular variety of English used by the speakers themselves. Elsewhere I have retained Australian spelling.

that veterans have brought to the group.

The first thing that I would like to pick up on from what Miguel said in his presentation is that communities on both sides of the Pacific are now much more interconnected than in the past. Advances in communications technology have meant that people are now able to maintain ongoing connections across vast distances as never before. In the past, a letter may have taken many weeks to arrive at its destination, but now a text message or e-mail can be sent and received pretty much instantaneously. Both 'snail mail' and e-mail involve a hyper-extension of social relationships across global space, but the difference is that, today, there is a relative *compression* of space, since the temporal lag through which two parties are able to communicate with each other has been all but eliminated (Harvey 1990; Estévez 2009). This may in fact be seen as one of the key features of the contemporary world: the possibility of the presence of 'absences', or, the simultaneous co-presence of 'here' and 'there' (Dufoix 2008, p. 100). This is a phenomenon which is having enormous impacts on all aspects of everyday life, and is allowing for the construction of what Steven Flusty (2004) refers to as 'everyday globalities'.

The very terrain on which diasporic activists operate is being radically transformed as a result of globalisation. But what exactly is meant by the term 'globalisation' in the first place? Principally, I use it here as shorthand to denote a whole range of processes, all serving to effect *global integration*. Far from being some kind of amorphous, monolithic juggernaut, then, globalisation is *multiple and plural*. Indeed, it can take infinite forms. Anytime you or I chat over webcam with a friend in Brazil or text a friend in Thailand or call a friend in Italy, we effect a globalisation of sorts; a hyper-extended social relationship compressed into a space of 'simultaneity' (Estévez 2009). From this perspective, it is not as if diasporans are simply actors on a stage that they had no part in making. On the contrary, they themselves are powerful world-making agents who have been central in catalysing global integration. Wherever people move, long-distance social ties proliferate and new emotional geographies are thus created – geographies that are later mobilised by diasporic social movements.

One crucial question remains to be asked: Where does Miguel's assertion that 'globalisation has allowed companies and governments to rule over the world' come into all of this? While globalisation is often treated as a synonym for global capitalism, I argue that it cannot simply be reduced to its economic dimension. Nevertheless, this dimension cannot be ignored. National economies are today becoming completely interdependent and

enmeshed with one another, engendering what Félix Guattari (2008 [1989]) has called 'integrated world capitalism'. In a related manner, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) have famously theorised that since the early 1970s, sovereign power, which was traditionally tied to the nation-state, is now transmuting into a new *supra*-national form of sovereignty, which they dub 'Empire'. This is seen as a global network comprising new supranational institutions (such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization), as well as transnational corporations and reconfigured nation-states, all 'united under a single logic of rule' (Hardt & Negri 2000, p. xii). No longer do we have a jigsaw puzzle of contiguous nation-states (as in the internationalist imaginary), but rather, a single global regime of sovereignty. This regime is, regulated not in the interests of this or that nation-state, but in the interests of global capitalism as a whole. Additionally, there is now a *global* economic elite, not simply a series of separate national bourgeoisies. Indeed, old distinctions between 'inside' and 'outside' are everywhere collapsing, with everything now seemingly interpenetrating everything else. The state of the contemporary world might be conceptualised therefore as one of 'complex entanglement'.

Importantly, through its collective reassessment process, FACES did eventually come to recognise the supranational character of contemporary capitalism. It set out to understand the nature of our present, surveyed the shifts that had been taking place globally since the days of the KDP, and took stock. In this manner, FACES members reached the realisation that not only should they take issue with individual governments, but must also begin to target transnational corporations – the 'biggest monster of our times' according to one of my research informants, Pedro. Corporations are indeed a core element of the new global landscape, with many having become quasi-empires in their own right¹¹.

While the nature of the global present was one theme around which FACES' reassessment revolved, the process also involved a second core theme: that concerning Filipino American identity and positionality. What is remarkable is that, when FACES' members put these two questions together, they realised that they actually mapped together perfectly. One need only look as far as FACES' current campaign against Chevron – a multinational oil

¹¹ For an extremely interesting take on the rise of corporate power and the specific modalities by which it operates, see Ferguson (2005).

company with its headquarters located in the San Francisco Bay Area, but which also happens to be responsible for environmental and social injustices in the community of Pandacan in the Philippines¹². Given these two facts, FACES – as a Filipino American organisation based in the San Francisco Bay Area albeit with emotional links to the Philippines – has seen an opportunity for itself to work in solidarity with local community groups fighting Chevron in Pandacan, as well as to simultaneously mobilise against Chevron in the Bay Area. The struggle at each end is local, but together, FACES and its allies in the Philippines are collaborating transnationally around an issue and a corporation that is equally transnational.

As Christine Cordero (in FACES 2006, p. 1), a long-time FACES member, has articulated:

Our families live here and there. Chevron is a US-based company and we, as US citizens, have the opportunity and obligation to hold them accountable to their actions. The health problems and issues affect all of our families and communities. The movement must be transnational because Chevron corporation is transnational.

Here, and this is my crucial point, *the hyper-extension of social solidarities through the diasporic experience (and the mobilisation of these solidarities through transnational activism) becomes the means with which to challenge the hyper-extension and transnationalisation of capital*. Indeed, this is the key insight arrived at by FACES after its two-year period of collective reflection: it is not enough for transnational activism to simply take the form of an abstract solidarity floating around in the ether of the World Wide Web. Instead, what is required are concrete, localised forms of action which can then be articulated together into a more meaningful, practical form of solidarity.

Perhaps 'transnational' is not even the right word in this context. The term 'translocal' seems much more fitting. As FACES states on its website, its concern is to address issues of

¹² To give the specifics, Chevron operates a large oil depot located in Pandacan, with little buffer between what is an extremely hazardous facility and the densely-populated residential areas surrounding it. Local residents suffer 'chronic exposure to toxic emissions' and face the constant 'threat of catastrophic spills, fires, and explosions', according to a recent press release (FACES 2009). As such, FACES, in collaboration with its Pandacan partners, is advocating for the closure and clean-up of the depot site.

‘environmental justice that impact Filipino communities in both the United States and the Philippines’ (FACES 2005). Crucially, when it becomes about local communities, all of a sudden the national takes a backseat. For instance, take Miguel’s emphasis of community-based over national struggles (once again, I am drawing here from his presentation to the 2007 FACES National Conference):

We’ve moved from advancing a national liberation struggle - and this was, kind of how I got into this, was, you know, I joined the anti-dictatorship movement to have national liberation for the Philippines... National liberation started its focus on seizing state power; that was kind of the thing in the Seventies and Eighties... [But] I feel that you don’t necessarily have to have that as a central part of your activity, of your strategy. It could be kind of what we’re doing, which is working with communities, issues that those communities confront... [The national is] still important, I don’t want to minimise this, but I don’t think it’s the central organizing principle in making this kind of transnational link...

The innovation of diasporic internationalism was to do away with pan-nationalism’s single-minded emphasis on the homeland, instead expanding its affinities to encompass two national territories. It articulated a dual allegiance to what were deemed to be two separate revolutions. The innovation of *diasporic cosmopolitanism*, however, is to do away with rigid notions of nationhood altogether. ‘It’s no longer bi-national’, asserts Miguel. In other words, it is not just about the Philippine national context and the US national context anymore. Rather, it is about concrete localities, caught up in one another’s destinies within the new global context of complex entanglement. And what is the global, after all, if not a vast network of interconnected *localities*, woven together into innumerable everyday globalities? From this perspective, the supranational, paradoxically enough, actually consists of the *subnational*. Thus, while on the one hand, FACES’ campaign against Chevron highlighted the need for the struggle to be as global as capitalism; it also highlighted the need for the struggle to be grounded locally on the other. The global and the local are not in contradiction here (as counter-intuitive as this may seem for anyone schooled in categorical, as opposed to relational, modes of thought), but rather, are held in dynamic tension in a common translocal framework.

The fact that Filipino Americans' global lives dovetail perfectly with the increasingly global nature of sovereignty is, as discussed above, of enormous significance. It means that for FACES members, cultural identity can serve as a valuable tool or vehicle with which to engage in activist work. One young FACES activist, Pilar, expressed sentiments along these exact lines in the lively discussion from the floor which followed Miguel's conference presentation:

[I've been] thinking about being a hybrid identity; being Filipino and also being American, because I grew up here, and using those identities as strategic, to build alliances... That's what's so amazing... that diaspora is a strategic framework... As us who are very hybridized and multiculturalized we have that leverage.

If cultural identity can serve as a means with which to engage in political work, then the converse is also the case: activism can become an important means for Filipino Americans to explore their own cultural identities. In fact, a number of FACES members recounted to me, both in interviews and in casual conversations, that one reason they chose to get involved in the organisation in the first place was precisely so that they could deal with the identity issues that inevitably came up for them as young people growing up in the diaspora. They wanted to figure out for themselves what it meant to be Filipino American; what it meant to be both rooted locally but also to have affinities elsewhere.

Importantly, FACES provides a space for their members to engage in this kind of exploration and reflection. This is evident, in fact, in the group's very name: Filipino/American Coalition for Environmental Solidarity. The slash in 'Filipino/American' here is quite intentional: it allows FACES to opt out of prioritising either 'Filipino' or 'American', not to mention the conjunction 'Filipino American'. Instead, FACES has made a conscious decision to leave the question of identity open and unfinalised. Not only are FACES members cognisant of their own ambiguous positionality as Filipino Americans; they also actively embrace this ambiguity and refuse all nationalistic reductions of their complex, hybrid subjectivities (which, in the manner of the pan-nationalist imaginary, would posit them simply as Filipinos in exile from their 'true' homeland, even if they were born and raised in the US).

Diasporic internationalism took initial steps to free itself from monolithic pan-nationalist notions of identity, but still ended up finalising Filipino American identity into a rigid bi-national

framework. Unlike with pan-nationalist and internationalist imaginaries, however, diasporic cosmopolitanism does not require that Filipino Americans conform to any crystallised notions of identity as a pre-requisite for meaningful action. Instead, identity became unmoored from all constants and freed of all fixity. For today's cosmopolitans, cultural identity is not something to be merely 'fulfilled' (as if there were such a thing as a timeless, transcendental identity out there that needed only to be learned), but rather, is something that must be constantly invented and reinvented, activated and reactivated.

'Fil-Whatever' subjectivity

The three distinct cultural-political imaginaries that have emerged in Filipino American diasporic activism over time (pan-nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism), are one point of discussion. Others include the need to take a more philosophical tack and zoom in a little closer on the question of radical cosmopolitan identity. I am especially interested in the possibility of new forms of belonging that do not require conformity to rigid, homogenous notions of identity. Indeed, the concept of belonging has often been tied to sameness, but need this be the case? What are the prospects today for new forms of non-absolutist, post-nationalist belonging? Is it possible to construct communities on the very basis of diversity, rather than treating difference as being somehow an obstacle to community? These are questions pertinent not only to people in the diaspora, but also to those in the so-called homeland. The Philippines is an archipelago of immense diversity, with dozens of languages and cultures all jostling and inter-mingling with one another within and between its thousands of islands, as they have always done. In the homeland, as in the diaspora, a thousand small hybridities proliferate every day beyond the bounds of what is officially designated as 'truly' Filipino. Unfortunately, however, nationalists choose to blind themselves to this diversity, preoccupying themselves instead with 'finding' (or more accurately, *inventing*¹³) timeless essences

¹³ If it is at all possible to discern some kind of unitary, national Philippine culture, it is not because such a thing exists 'naturally', or is somehow intrinsic to the land and peoples contained within the arbitrary borders of the Philippine nation-state, but rather, because *it has itself been produced by nationalist discourse*. The outcome is confused for the origin, and the effect for the essence. Just as Judith Butler (1990, p. 3) wrote of 'the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy' with respect to the category of 'woman', so too might we consider the same to be the case with respect

that can somehow 'unite' the 'Filipino people'.

To address all of these questions, I focus the discussion on the nexus between diasporic pan-nationalism and diasporic cosmopolitanism in particular. The reason for this is that, during my six-month visit to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2007, the key epistemological tension that I witnessed there was precisely that between the pan-nationalist and cosmopolitan imaginaries. Diasporic internationalism, meanwhile, seems to have suffered a decline since the KDP's dissolution in 1987. How is it that pan-nationalism has been able, not only to survive, but also to continue thriving in the current context, in stark contrast to diasporic internationalism? I will not attempt to answer this very complex question in the limited space afforded to me here, but what I can do is to offer one example of an organisation in the Filipino diaspora that retains a pan-nationalist imaginary; that being, *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan USA* (BAYAN-USA), or, the New Patriotic Alliance. BAYAN-USA is largely inspired by the CPP (now banned in both the Philippines and the US) and operates with an identical Maoist ideology. It considers itself as an overseas chapter of BAYAN in the Philippines, rather than as an organisation in its own right. As such, it sees its role as that of a 'support' organisation, clearly reflected in Article 5, Section 1 of BAYAN-USA's by-laws, formulated at its 2005 founding assembly in San Francisco:

As an integral part of the national democratic movement of the Philippines, the mission and purpose of BAYAN-USA is to gather the broadest possible political, moral, material and sectoral support for BAYAN and the national democratic struggle of the Filipino people (BAYAN-USA 2005).

The organisation even goes so far as to argue that the problems that Filipino Americans face in the US are not their own, but rather, that they have their origins in injustices faced by their brothers and sisters in the homeland. Article 4, Section 1 of the by-laws, for example, states: 'the issues and struggles of Filipinos in the U.S. are rooted in the struggle for national democracy in the Philippines' (BAYAN-USA 2005). In this formulation, diasporic Filipinos are only ever seen as peninsular extensions of the Philippine nation-state. What follows on from this is that diasporic Filipinos are cast as somehow 'lacking', rendered but 'inauthentic' carbon copies of their compatriots in the homeland.

to the category of 'The Philippines' or with any other modernist compartmentalisation of reality for that matter.

Diasporic cosmopolitanism intervenes here, insisting that the condition of the diasporan is not one of deficiency or lack, but one of overflowing possibilities.

At this point, I would like to proceed to illustrate this by way of a narrative. In August 2007, as a part of my fieldwork, I participated in a two-week solidarity tour of the Philippines that FACES runs annually as a way of reconnecting with its partner organisations. The programme aims to facilitate cultural exchange and the strengthening of political solidarities between Filipino and Filipino American activists in their common struggles, despite being from opposite sides of the Pacific. On the first day of the solidarity tour, we were addressed by Joel Rocamora, a prominent leftist intellectual in the Philippines and a veteran of the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. He argued that we needed to begin to think about ways to redefine Filipino nationality outside of territoriality; about how to conceive of culture across national borders and how to accommodate diverse expressions of being Filipino:

In a situation of, sort of, a barrierless world... in a situation where I can talk to my friend in California for an hour without having to pay for it because we use Skype... it's like it's possible to create culture across national boundaries. And so effectively it becomes, what sorts of identity do we work out of, so that we create value, we create culture out of that identity, and we don't ask, you know, whether you're more Filipino than I am or I'm more Filipino than you are?

'This animal called the "Global Filipino"', Rocamora continued, 'actually really exists'. What this means is the proliferation of new identities and the constant redefinition and renegotiation of old ones. Cultural production and innovation are occurring everyday, both in the Philippines and in the diaspora. Thus, no longer is there only one way of being Filipino, but many. No longer are there just Filipinos, but also Fil-Ams¹⁴, Fil-Canadians, Fil-Australians, Fil-Italians, '*Fil-Whatever*'.

Although only used by Rocamora as a kind of throwaway turn-of-phrase, I believe there is much more to the idea of the 'Fil-Whatever' than is evident initially; in particular, when we connect it to Giorgio Agamben's (1993) use of the notion of 'whatever' as a philosophical concept. In order to explain this concept and its relevance for the discussion here, I will firstly need

¹⁴ Colloquial term for 'Filipino American'

to explicate the new theory of difference that Agamben seeks to outline in *The Coming Community* (1993). Key to his argument is that we must reject the universal-particular binary of modernist thinking in favour of a new couplet of commonality-singularity. Whereas the former presupposes a structuralist ontology of discrete entities compartmentalised into wholes and parts of wholes, the latter rests instead on a poststructuralist ontological schema of expansive, distributed networks. These networks are comprised of singularities whose commonality, by virtue of being entangled in a common web, does not efface each singularity's irreducible difference. Commonality is achieved across difference, rather than at the expense of it. Here we can see how Agamben's ideas depart from the modernist binary between the universal and the particular, which are always deemed to be antithetical.

Agamben's project here recalls both Gottfried Leibniz's *The Monadology* (1925) as well as Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1994). In a vein similar to that of Agamben, Deleuze attempts to formulate a specifically non-Hegelian theory of difference; that when things come into existence, they do not do so only by virtue of that which they are not (that is, through the operation of dialectal negation). Instead, Deleuze (1994) invents a more positive conception of 'difference-in-itself', freeing difference from the negative. Andre Breton (1972 [1924], p. 9) too, in the *Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924 intimated towards the kind of ideas that Agamben wrote about in *The Coming Community*, such as when he asked:

If in a cluster of grapes there are no two alike, why do you want me to describe this grape by the other, by all the others, why do you want me to make a palatable grape? Our brains are dulled by the incurable mania of wanting to make the unknown known, classifiable.

Where Breton gives the example of grapes, Agamben (1993) gives the example of the human face: Each is irreducibly singular and unique, yet each is also recognisably human. Thus, we are always at once simultaneously singular and common, and it is precisely this emphasis that Agamben theorises as the ontology of 'whatever'. In Agamben's (1993, p. 20) words: 'Common and proper, genus and individual are only the two slopes dropping down from either side of the watershed of whatever'.

Re-casting Rocamora's throwaway usage of the term 'Fil-Whatever' in an entirely new light, let us imagine, for example, the Filipino diaspora as a network, or perhaps, a vast archipelago.

Each singularity or island within this archipelago constitutes a 'difference-in-itself' (Deleuze 1994) not reducible to any kind of averaged out, essentialised, generic whole. Together, these irreducible singularities comprise the *irreducible multiplicity* of the archipelago. Importantly, singularities can take any number of forms. Individual Filipinos, Fil-Australians and Fil-Ams, for example, could all be said to be irreducibly singular, but so too could each community organisation, political grouping, network of friends, extended family, event, or city within which diasporic Filipinos live, work and play. What is crucial is that the irreducible difference of each singularity in the ontological archipelago does not preclude its *commonality* with others. Conversely, their commonality does not at all efface their heterogeneity. Here, the isomorphism between Agambenian ontology and the *translocal* schema sketched earlier begins to reveal itself. In modernist thinking, difference is conceived in terms of the particular, which is always deemed to be at odds with the universal. As a consequence, modernist politics does violence to difference because it relies on departicularising the particular as a means to accommodating the universal. Nationalism, for example, destroys internal difference by enforcing homogeneity to a transcendental ideal of what it means to be an authentic member of the national community. Diasporic pan-nationalism, of the sort I have discussed in this article, operates in precisely this manner, constantly seeking to flatten out diasporic differences in order to reinscribe diasporic Filipinos back into a transcendental ideal of Filipino-ness.

Where diasporic pan-nationalism rests on a homogenous notion of nation-ness, the cosmopolitan imaginary, in contrast, allows for, and embraces, heterogeneity. It recognises that commonality can be built between singularities in ways which do not erase difference. Take my participation in the FACES solidarity tour, for example: I was a Fil-Australian amongst Fil-Americans interfacing with Filipinos; all of us simultaneously singular and common – singular albeit not at the expense of our commonality and common albeit not at the expense of our singularity. We were all able to work together as Fil-Whatever, *through* our heterogeneity, rather than in spite of it; that is, we did not have to conform to a transcendental ideal of homogenised Filipino-ness as a pre-requisite for common action.

'Transcendent value', writes Felix Guattari (1995, p. 103) 'presents itself as immovable, always already there and thus always going to stay there. From its perspective, subjectivity remains in perpetual lack, guilty a priori'. Thus, to the nationalist, hybridised diasporic subjectivity remains deficient. Pan-nationalists thus

prescribe that Filipino Americans and other diasporans must overcome their confusion with their hybrid identities and get in touch with their 'true' identities as Filipinos. Too many diasporans internalise this kind of logic and become anxious about their perpetual condition of lack. Shifting from a nationalist to a cosmopolitan imaginary, as FACES has done, is thus a key manoeuvre, as it allows diasporans to reconceive themselves not as lacking, but as overdetermined; uncontainable within existing categories, and thus always spilling over into newness. As such, diasporic cosmopolitanism is facilitating the construction of new forms of belonging not based on essences, allowing diasporans to locate 'home' not just in the homeland, but also in the diaspora.

Conclusions

'Let where you are going, not where you come from, henceforth be your honour!... your nobility shall not gaze backward, but *outward*! You shall be fugitives from all fatherlands and fore-fatherlands! You shall love your *children's land*: let this love be your new nobility – the undiscovered land in the furthest sea! I bid your sails seek it and seek it!'

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2003 [1885], pp. 220-221).

As I have hopefully demonstrated in this article, diasporic social movements constitute a privileged site for examining both the residual pasts and emergent futures that inhere in the global present. Social movements are where prevailing cultural-political imaginaries come to be contested and reinvented. These imaginaries are formed out of the substrate of their specific contexts, but also act back on them, transforming them in turn. In this article, I set out to identify three distinct imaginaries that have arisen in Filipino American diasporic activism in the past forty years, concomitant with the rise of globalisation.

To reiterate, diasporic internationalism first arose as an early attempt to counter the CPP's pan-nationalist imaginary or, alternatively, what often went by the name of 'narrow nationalism' (Toribio 2000, p. 38). Where pan-nationalism simply posited diasporans as 'overseas' Filipinos, KDP activists asserted an independent US-based identity *in addition* to their Filipino identity. In effect, the dual line formulation was a tentative first response to the new challenges posed by globalisation to old,

modernist modes of thought. Although these ways of thinking were perfectly capable of conceptualising stasis and unity, they remained blinded to mobility and multiplicity. The proponents of diasporic internationalism grappled with these problematics and tried their best to understand them, but their model was insufficient to the task. It was as static as the pan-nationalist imaginary that it had set out to challenge. Whereas the former prioritised one static national context, the latter simply tacked an extra nation-state on, seeing two instead of one.

What is important about diasporic cosmopolitanism is that it has been able to do what diasporic internationalism tried to but could not: that is, to adequately deal with mobility and multiplicity and to invent new values by which they could be embraced. It has been able to do this precisely by unmooring notions of identity from the nation – refusing ‘all fatherlands and fore-fatherlands’ as Nietzsche (2003 [1885], p. 221) puts it above, in one of his signature moments of cogent madness – and regrounding them instead in both local communities and translocal networks. Simultaneously, diasporic cosmopolitanism has liberated political thought from a methodological nationalism that had straight-jacketed the activist imagination for decades.

Pan-nationalism and internationalism were both understandable responses to the changing global context, but only diasporic cosmopolitanism seems to have succeeded in becoming an imaginary wholly contingent in contemporary realities. It is not that there are some imaginaries that are more ‘correct’ than others in particular circumstances. Rather, it is that some tools work better than others in certain situations. It is not about what is right, but about what works (Deleuze & Guattari 1994). Tools that might have served well in the past can often prove blunt today. The crucial point is that, if we continue to limit our cultural and political epistemologies within the bounds of methodological nationalism, we only become accomplices in our own subservience. Instead, we must take ownership of the global which we helped to precipitate in the first place; to continue constructing everyday, translocal globalities and asserting our autonomous mobility independent of the dictates of sovereignty.

In conclusion, I would like to conjecture that, today, perhaps all migration is *internal migration*. Removed from the ‘inside’ of homeland space, diasporans might be seen as constituting a vast swarm of outsiders, who, through their riotous mobility, are in fact weaving a new inside; *that of the world as a whole*. No longer mere exile, the diasporan thus becomes reconstituted as *global citizen*.

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