

# **A Filipino Transnational Advocacy Network:**

The Case of the US Bases Cleanup Campaign in the  
Philippines and the United States

**Ma. Larissa Lelu P. Gata**

Ph.D. in Sociology/Environmental Sociology  
Department of Social Forestry and Forest Governance  
University of the Philippines Los Banos

Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA)  
Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS)  
Gamma Sigma Delta Honor Society of Agriculture (GSD-HAS)  
November 29, 2011

# Presentation Outline

- Abstract
- What is TAN?
- Emergence of the US Bases Cleanup Campaign
- From Local to Transnational
- A Rift in the Campaign
- Abeyance Structures
- Future Research



# Abstract

- Experiences of the partner-organizations
  - ✓ Campaign as an offshoot of social movements against US interventionist policies
  - ✓ Relationships among partner-organizations evolving from mere information sharing into a more engaged collaboration
  - ✓ Socio-political dynamics creating wedges of misunderstanding and distrust leading to the premature decline of the transnational advocacy network
  - ✓ Various abeyance structures absorbing former partner-organizations after the decline
- Better-resourced partner has a greater success in moving forward by keeping the cultural aspect of its organization, maintaining its vision, and restructuring its organization
- Least-resourced partners resort are absorbed by NGOs that can provide for their temporary welfare.

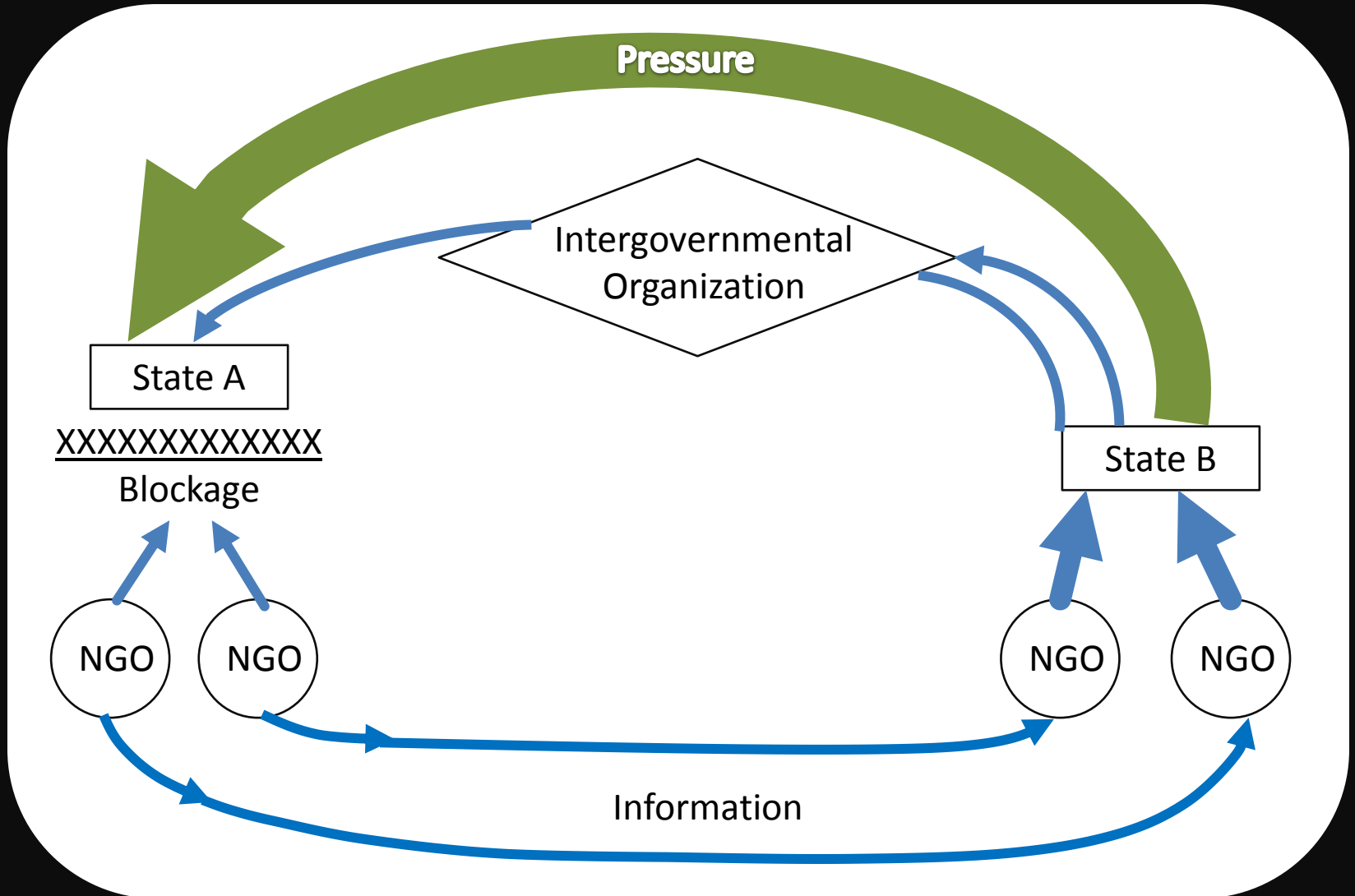


# What is TAN?

- An informal configuration of non-state actors
- A group of actors who are bound together by shared values, exchanges of information and services, and articulations of common discourses, despite their location across national boundaries (Keck and Sikkink 1998)
- Main activity is to share information, and not to be involved in a sustained manner in coalition-building or mobilization of large constituencies (Khagram et al. 2002: 7)

# Boomerang Pattern

A **TAN** Approach as theorized by Keck & Sikkink (1998)



# The Story

Emergence

Transnationalization

Rift and Decline

Abeyance



<http://www.yonip.com/archives/PTFBC/images/sro-PTFBC-O3.jpg>

# Emergence of the US Bases Cleanup Campaign



## Argument:

- The emergence of this campaign was an offshoot of social movements against continuing US interventions in the Philippines.
- A local environmental campaign that emerged out of relationships of colonization, protests and collaboration, and commenced by adopting a victimization frame to advance its advocacy.

# A Colonial Past Revisited

- The Filipino people have had the misfortune of being “liberated” four times during their entire history. First came the **Spaniards** who “liberated” them from the “enslavement of the devil,” next came the **Americans** who “liberated” them from Spanish oppression, then the **Japanese** who “liberated” them from American imperialism, then the **Americans** again who “liberated” them from the Japanese fascists. After every “liberation” they found their country occupied by foreign “benefactors.” The people resisted each ruler; although each struggle sought to change certain objective conditions, it had its most profound effect on the people themselves. (Constantino 1975: 12)



# American Occupation

- 1898 – US acquired the Philippines for \$20 M via the Treaty of Paris
- Organic Act of 1902 - US government exercised full sovereignty over the islands.
  - Philippines as “unincorporated territory”
- The Military Bases Agreement (MBA) was signed on March 24, 1947.
  - US gave tougher terms to the Philippines than Japan.

# The Tragedy called Mt. Pinatubo

- 1991 – Mt. Pinatubo erupted
- Buried the entire Clark Air Base, rendering all facilities non-operational
- US troops left the CAB after a few days, leaving behind the facilities available for the Philippine government to occupy
- Philippine government utilized the area as temporary shelter of around 350,000 evacuees (or 20,000 families) atop the CAB motor pool

# Clark after Pinatubo



Buildings and vegetation at Clark Air Base, Philippines, are destroyed by a thick, wet layer of ash following the gigantic explosion of Mount Pinatubo on June 15, 1991

Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/86908/Buildings-and-vegetation-at-Clark-Air-Base-Philippines-are-destroyed>



Source: **Photograph by R.P. Hoblitt on June 16, 1991**

[http://volcanoes.usgs.gov/lmgs/Jpg/Pinatubo/16112441-008\\_caption.html](http://volcanoes.usgs.gov/lmgs/Jpg/Pinatubo/16112441-008_caption.html)

# Toxic Contamination Uncovered

- Not enough resources for the evacuees who depended on rations for food and water
- Philippine government dug up wells as supplement
- Different smell and texture of the water drawn from these wells
  - “Rusty and muddy”
  - “Foul-smelling and oily”
  - “Putrid and easily spoiled even after hours of boiling”
- Children, pregnant women and elderly became sick
  - High rate of miscarriage
  - High rate of deformities among babies



# Toxins in the Bases

- PCBs – polychlorinated biphenyls
- Benzene
- Other persistent organic pollutants (POPs)



# Inheritors of the US Military Toxic Legacy



- **Micah Rose Pabalan**, 5 years old, disorder of the central nervous system
- **Sheila Pineda**, 3 years old, congenital heart disease
- **Aliaro Mercado**, 5 years old, asthma, cannot speak
- **Crissel Pabustan**, 3 years old, very small, cannot speak
- **Abraham Taruc**, 4 years old, cerebral palsy

# Kevin Dave Piring, 7



<http://cdn.lightgalleries.net/4bd5ebfe91f0d/images/USBases002-2.jpg>



# Crizel Jane Valencia, 6

## Rainbow Warrior

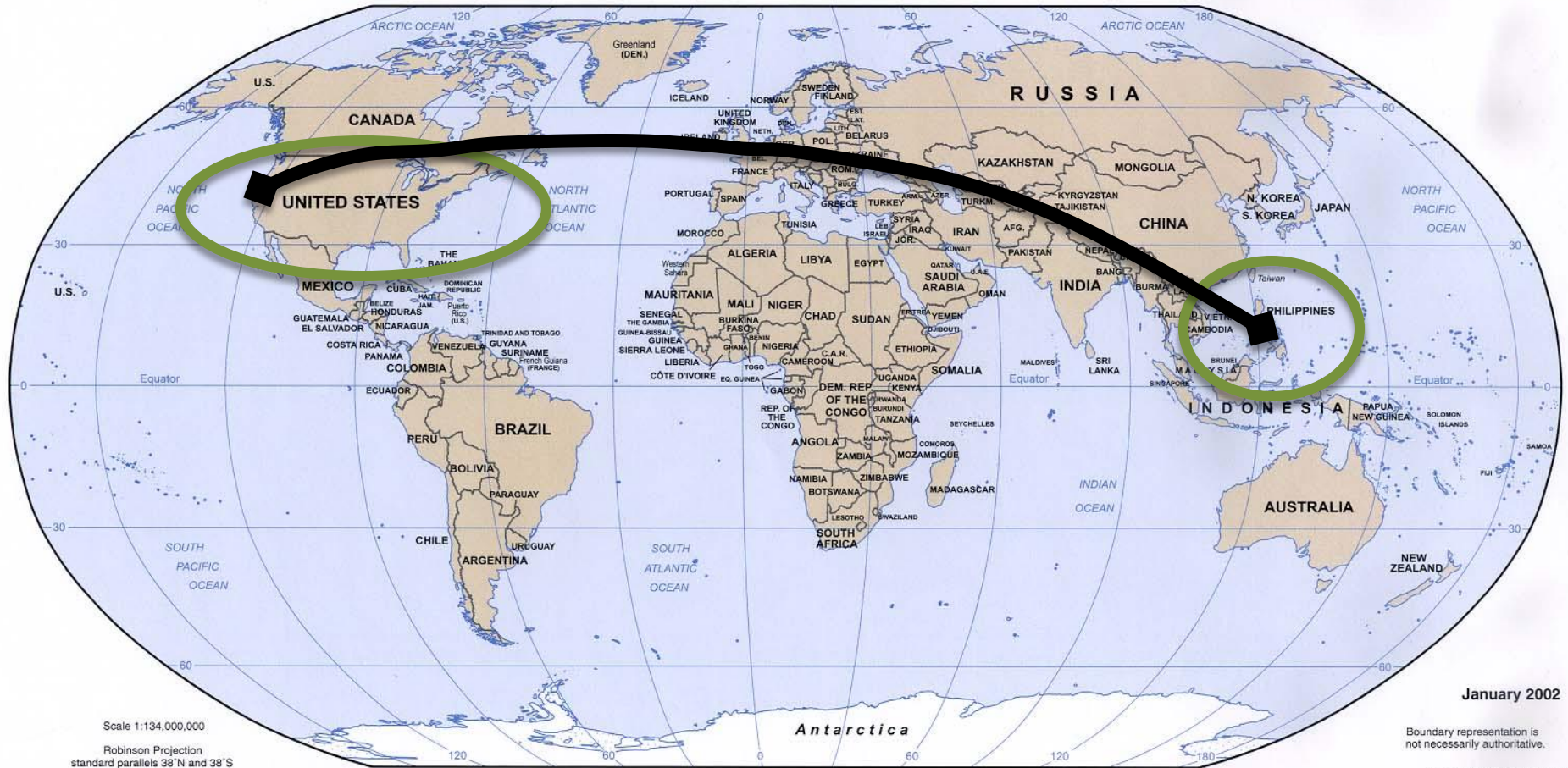


Source:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/ph/News/greenpeace-philippine-blog/remembering-crizel/blog/29195/>



# From Local to Transnational



# Partner-Organizations



- People's Task Force for Bases Cleanup (PTFBC)



- Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition (NFPC)



- Greenpeace International



- US Working Group (USWG)
- Filipino American Coalition for Environmental Solidarity (FACES)



# From a Third World *Sitio*...

## *Madapdap Resettlement Center*





# To a First World City...

*San Francisco, California*



Source: <http://www.facesolidarity.org>

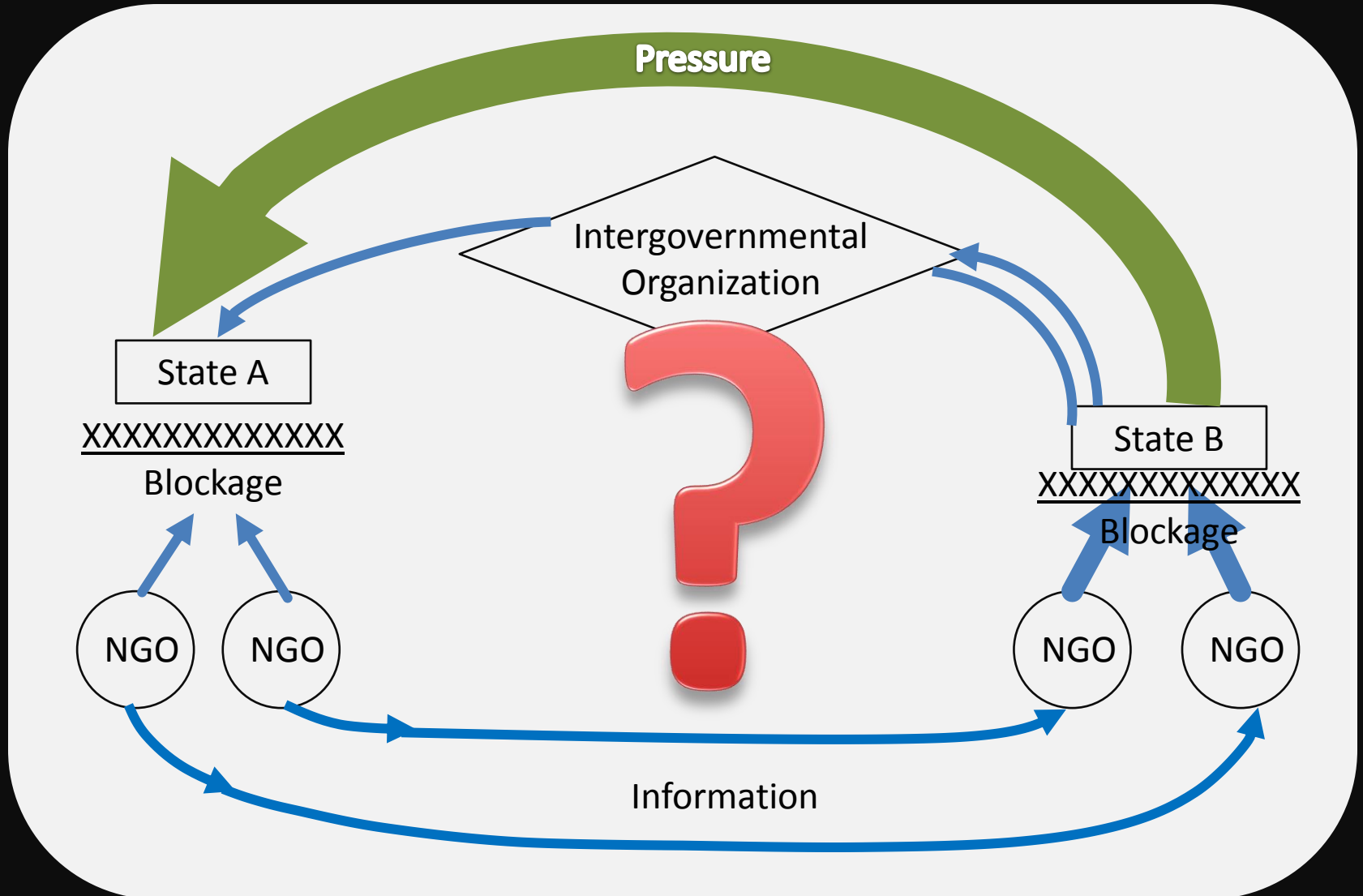
# Key Strategies

- Transformed the PTFBC **from local to national** NGO in order to capture larger attention toward its cause
- Solicited **technical expertise** from US scholars to establish legitimacy of the cause
- Built **networks** within and between the US and the Philippines and assist in improving bilateral dialogue and cooperation between the two governments

# Transnationalism as Strategy

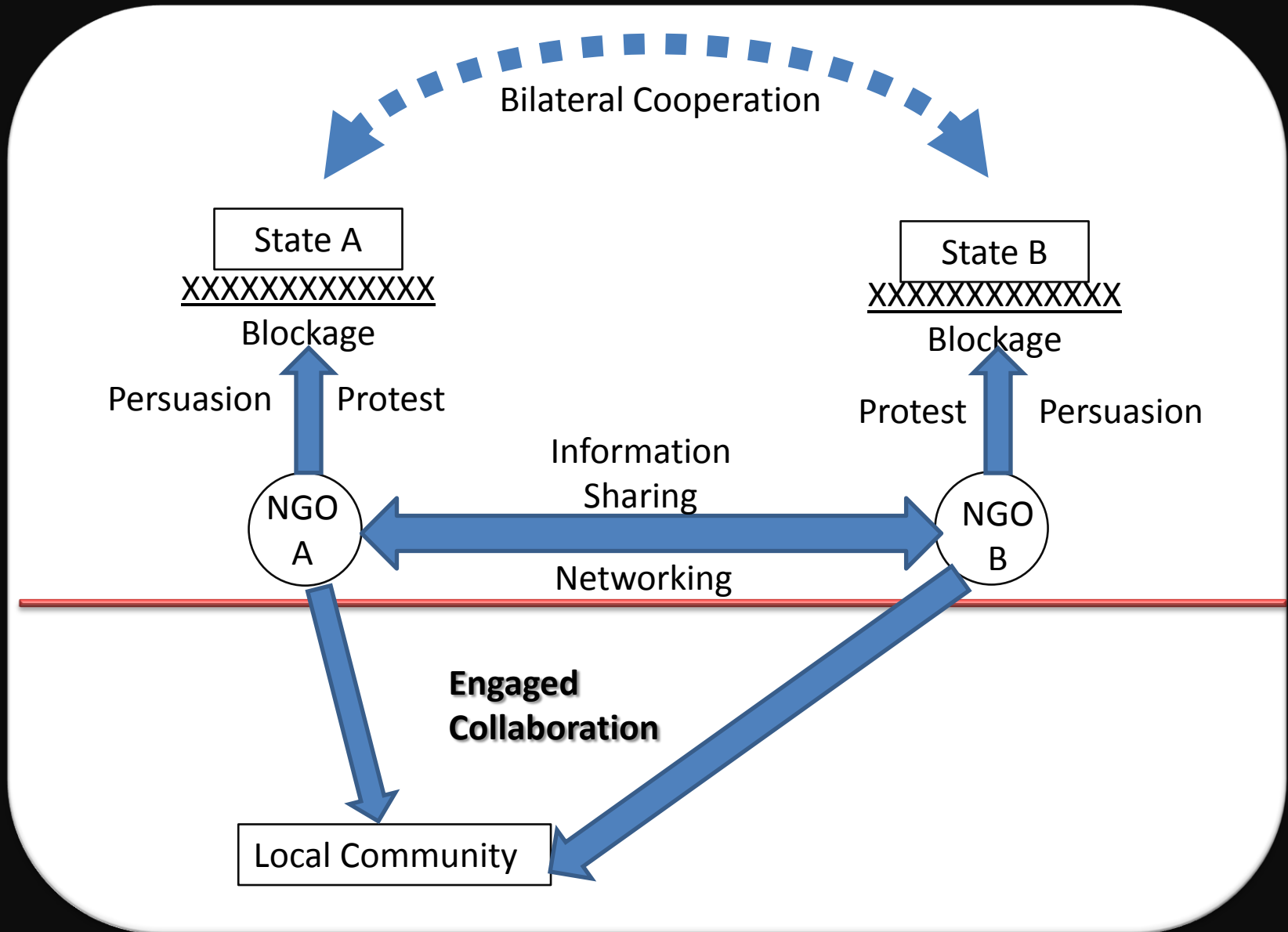
- Entails blurring the political-geographic divide between NGOs across borders through information sharing
- TAN can also move past mere information sharing to more engaged collaboration
  - Reaching out to the community of victims
  - Using grassroots organizing to get community involvement in the advocacy work
  - Deepening of involvement through community projects such as providing medical assistance, scholarship, and clean water

# Remember the Boomerang Pattern?





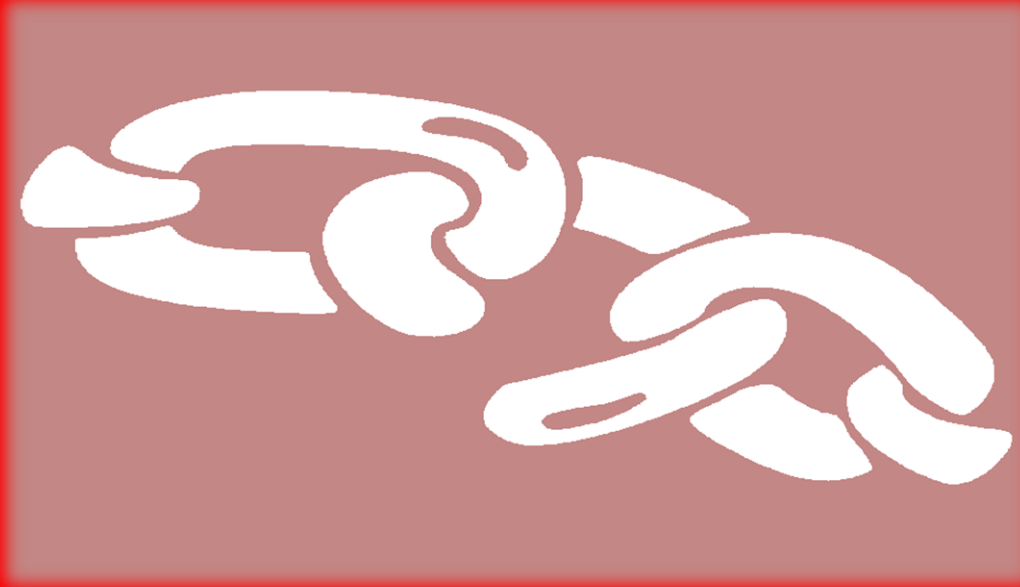
# Theory of Engaged Collaboration



# Theory of Engaged Collaboration

- Given time and space, I theorize that the nature of relationships among partner-organizations within TANs can evolve from mere information sharing into a more engaged collaboration.
- In this case study, there are three prominent dimensions of engaged collaboration:
  - Technical/Legal
  - Ethical
  - Ethnic

# Rift in the Campaign

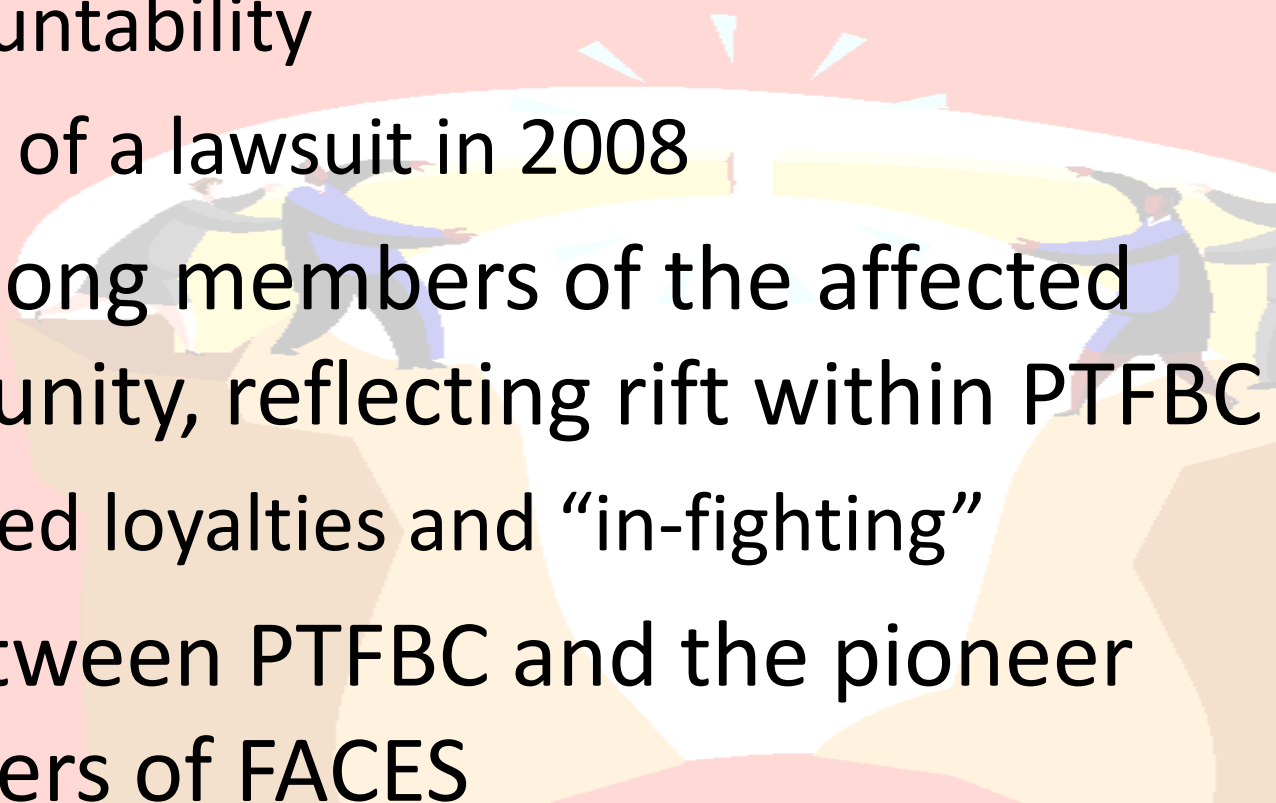


Why do seemingly successful TANs decline? What are the contributing factors that lead to their demise?

# Factors of the Decline

- A rift among partner organizations of the cleanup campaign
- Dismissal of cases filed against the Philippine and US governments
- Lack of sustained community support in the US
- Effect of the 9-11 incident on the willingness of people to be identified with the cleanup campaign

# A Three-way Rift in the Campaign

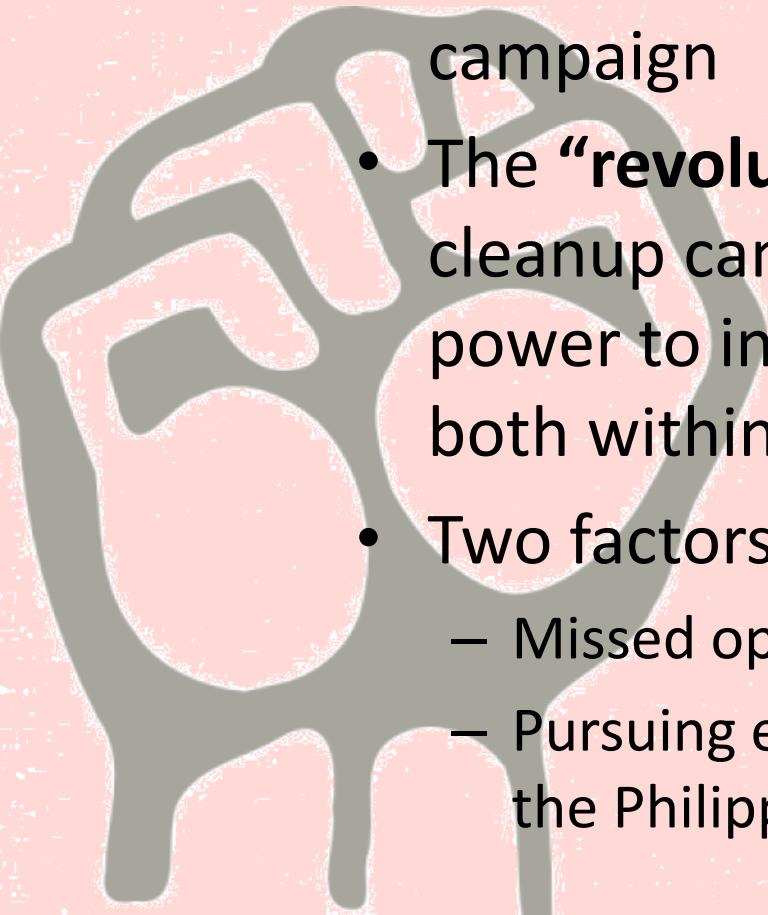
- an internal rift within the PTFBC
    - crises in leadership and financial accountability
    - filing of a lawsuit in 2008
  - rift among members of the affected community, reflecting rift within PTFBC
    - divided loyalties and “in-fighting”
  - rift between PTFBC and the pioneer members of FACES
- 
- An illustration in the background shows a landscape with a deep, jagged rift or canyon. On the left side of the rift, two stylized human figures in business suits are walking towards the center. On the right side, two more stylized human figures in business suits are walking away from the center. The rift is filled with a bright yellow light, and there are several small, white, triangular shapes floating above it, suggesting a bright light or a point of conflict. The overall scene is set against a light pink background.

# A Case of Premature Deradicalization

- Whereas 9-11 made radical mobilization more difficult for FACES in the US, I also argue that in the Philippines, the cleanup campaign suffered ultimately from what I call “premature deradicalization” of its agenda.
- **Deradicalization** means “coming to terms with the existing order” (Tucker 1976:236):
  - In the stage of deradicalization, the movement loses its revolutionary otherworldliness, the alienation from existing conditions arising out of its commitment to a future perfect order, and makes an accommodation to the world as it stands.

# Premature Deradicalization

- Premature deradicalization refers to the unnecessary early termination of the “revolutionary” vision of the bases cleanup campaign
- The “**revolutionary**” vision of the bases cleanup campaign involved a belief in people’s power to influence the workings of the state, both within and across national boundaries.
- Two factors:
  - Missed opportunity with VFA negotiations
  - Pursuing established institutional channels in suing the Philippine and US governments.



# Movement in Abeyance





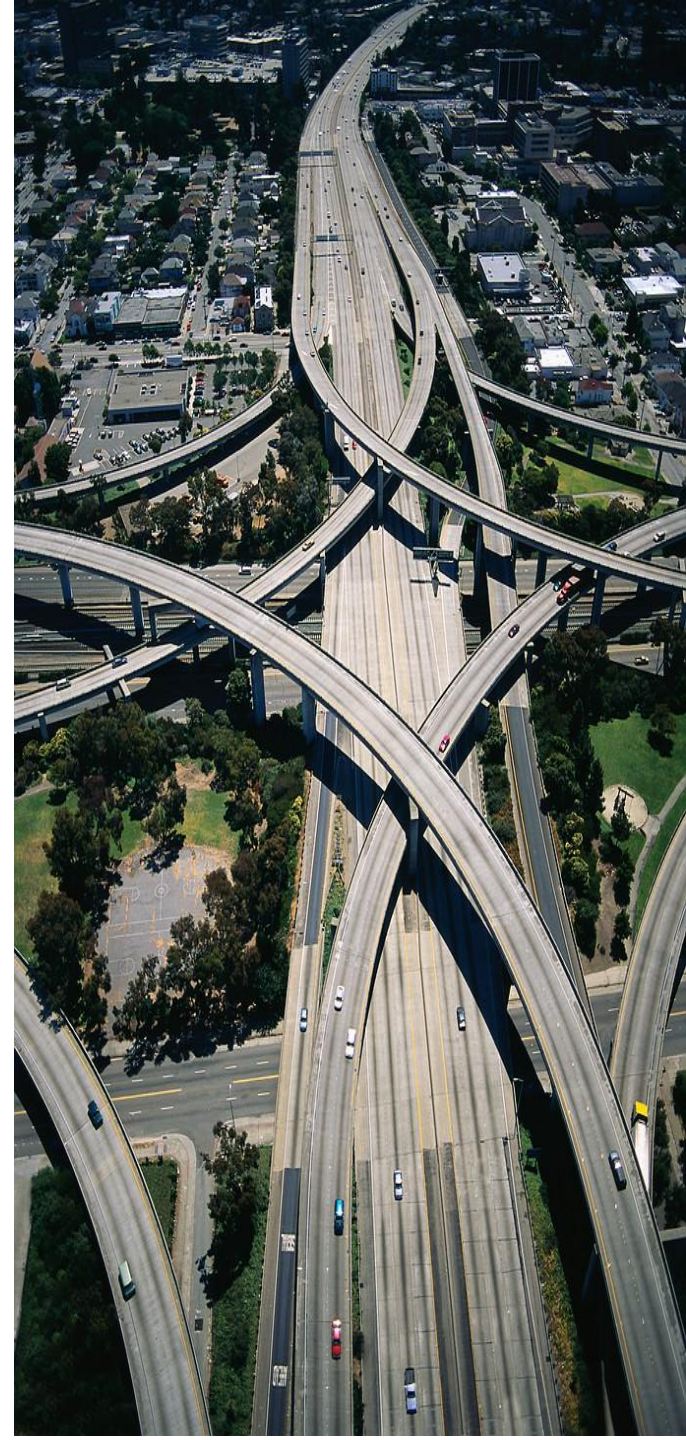
# Abeyance Structures

Abeyance structures are typically formalized social movement organizations (SMOs) which sustain the collective identity of the movement and retain activists between waves of mobilization.



# Abeyance Structures

- Route 1: Return to Previous Affiliations
- Route 2: Moving Forward with New Organizations
- Route 3: Road to Renewal of the Campaign
- Route 4: Redefining the Mission



# Abeyance Structures

1

**GREENPEACE**



Local Government Units

Grassroots NGOs

2

**FOCUS ON GLOBAL SOUTH**



3



Alliance for Bases Cleanup International

4





# PTFBC Now



- People's Task Force for Bases Cleanup under the wings of the Bayanihan Foundation Worldwide

Source: [http://globaldale.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/img\\_0309.jpg](http://globaldale.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/img_0309.jpg)

# FACES NOW



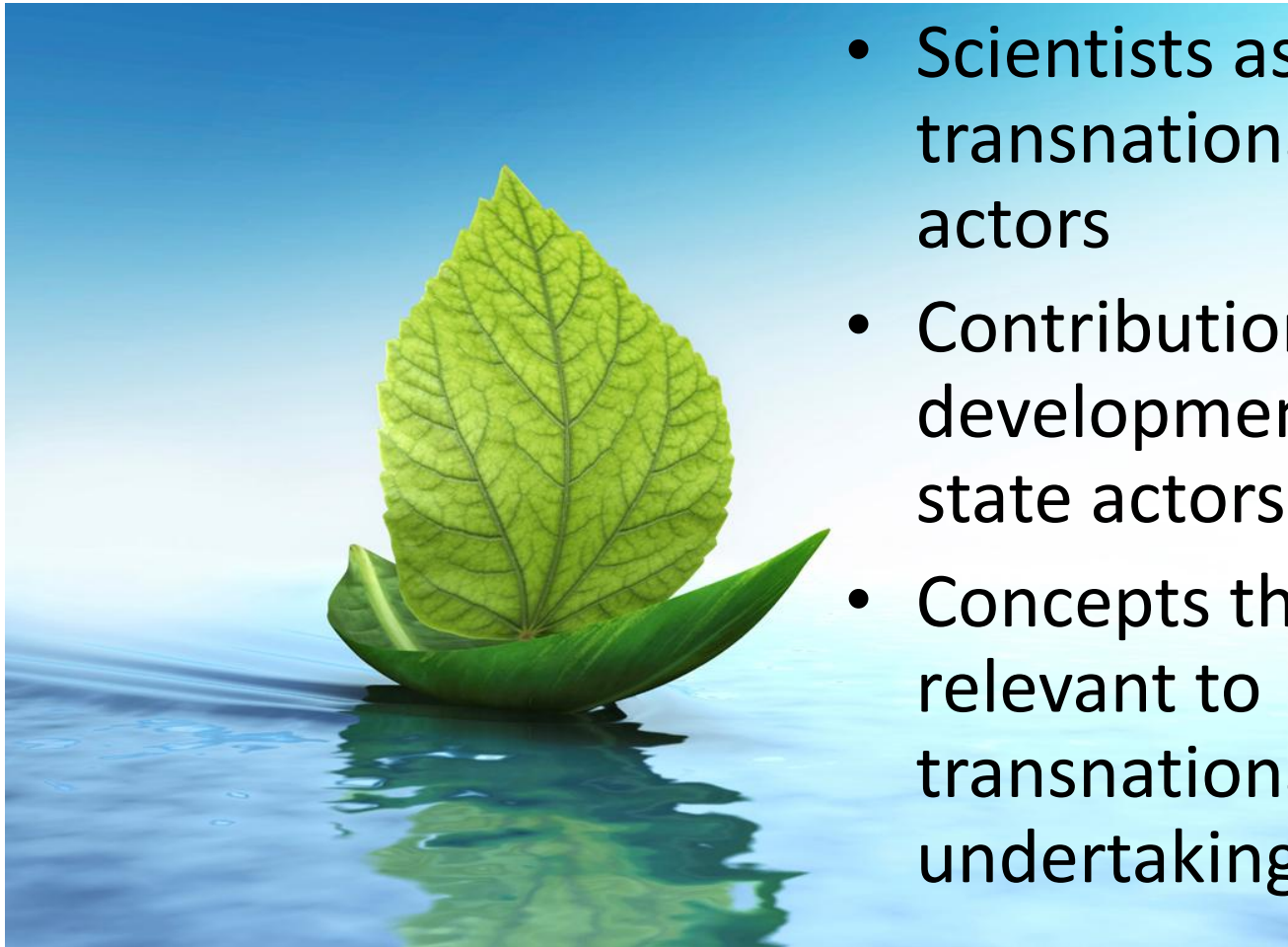
[http://farm4.staticflickr.com/3371/4639707765\\_fb77b8ee65.jpg](http://farm4.staticflickr.com/3371/4639707765_fb77b8ee65.jpg)

- FACES found new partners in the Philippines
- Took on issues that are related to Environmental Justice movement
  - Pandacan oil depot
  - Chevron

# Future Research

- Political role of TANs
- Comparative research on TANs initiated in developing countries
- Research on ethnic-based TANs in fostering more engaged collaboration in Diasporas
- TANs in abeyance to better understand the lifespan of TANs and renewal of TANs after decline

# Relevance to the Science Community



- Scientists as transnational non-state actors
- Contribution to development by non-state actors
- Concepts that are relevant to transnational undertakings