



Original article

The philosophy of work of the Lumads¹ in Surigao del Sur, Philippines, as an alternative to modern technology and globalization

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to contribute to addressing some of the recent social problems in the Philippines that globalization engenders through an engagement with the Surigao Lumads' view of work as an alternative to globalization. In particular, this paper examines the impact of modern technology very briefly as an agent of globalization on some of the Lumad communities in Surigao and explores some of the ways in which they draw on their rich cultural heritage to confront and resist such global concerns facing them today. This is premised on the idea that the model of work by these local people can be an alternative to the destructive tendency of modern technology and globalization. The researchers argue that the local communities in the periphery (in this case the Lumads in Surigao) continue to view work as means for the satisfaction of needs and, therefore, the championing of this philosophy of work would contribute greatly to cushioning, if not preventing, the inevitable impact of globalization.

KEYWORDS: *philosophy of work, Lumads, Manobo, Mamanwa, globalization*

1 INTRODUCTION

As is well known, “work” plays a central role in human and social development. In fact, Marx (1964) claims that work is the essence of humanity, that individuals cease to be humans the moment they cease to work. According to Marcuse (2007), Marx views work as the individuals' affirmation of their being because they can produce and reproduce an external, material objective world through work. Through work, therefore, individuals can transform and appropriate the material objects they encounter to satisfy their needs, a satisfaction necessary for the full realization of their potentialities and their becoming a truly free being. Put differently, work is the individuals' act of perfecting

themselves. In this sense, as already mentioned, work is the individuals' essence; it defines human beings as conscious beings distinct from the other animals, who, in producing and reproducing the objective world to their advantage, create a world in their own image and express and perfect their potentialities. Therefore, work cannot be conceived purely in economics but as an “activity”, that is to say, an act of forming and shaping human capacities (Ocaý, 2015; see also Ladero, 2019).

In relative parlance, Freud (1973; see also Ocaý, 2009) claims that work is the élan vital of civilization. Freud argues that without work, society would not have attained the kind of unprecedented progress that we witnessed today. As a matter of fact, for Freud, work is one of the foundations (the other is Eros) of society. He says that people “come together”, that is, live in society, first because they are forced to do so by economic necessity and, second, that they want to do so to acquire their basic desires. Thus, for Freud, civilization is first of all progress in work, that is, work for the procurement and augmentation of the necessities of life.

In Marx, as in Freud, work therefore must be viewed as “cooperative” work and one that satisfies needs. This means that people would somehow need to sacrifice individual interests for the common good. But with today's economic globalization, driven by the neoliberal policies of the West and the unprecedented technological progress, all aspects of the work process, for example, what is to be produced, and how prices and wages are to be determined are solely determined by the producers themselves (Ocaý, 2010; see also Ocaý, 2015; and Cutillas et. al., 2018). As a result, the realization of the goal of work is perverted. Thus, social development is greatly jeopardized as people will hardly find satisfaction in their work. In addition, the idea of social solidarity and progress in civilization which cooperative work harbors has also been greatly undermined. Economic globalization and technological domination have indeed produced numerous social problems across the world (Gray, 1998; see also Ocaý, 2019), one of which is the perversion of the function of work resulting in what we can rightly call as the “structural transformation” of the

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communities in the periphery.

In the face of the tremendous power of modern technology, science and financial techniques, the appeal to indigenous work ethic might appear incredibly naïve. But this is only so if one forgets the immensely destructive nature of modern technology as an agent of globalization. To speak very simply, and if one lets oneself be guided by the generally accepted notion that globalization and modern technology have a destructive tendency: if the logic at work in the West, which has been imported to the new emerging powers, and which has subjugated territories “in the periphery” like the Lumad communities in Surigao, is left to rule unchecked, only a catastrophe can emerge from it: either social (new wars) or environmental (climate change), or a combination of the two. Against this catastrophic background, the alternative model of work ethic presented by the Lumads of Surigao, and indeed the historical struggles that were waged in its name, suddenly appear anything but sentimental. Local work ethic, therefore, can be viewed as one of the rich sources of “social hope” in today’s highly globalized society.

Given this context, this paper therefore aims to contribute to addressing some of the recent social problems in the Philippines that globalization, particularly technological advancement, engenders through an engagement with the Surigao Lumads’ view work of as an alternative to globalization. In particular, this paper examines very briefly the impact of technological advancement as an agent of globalization on some of the Lumad communities in Surigao and explores some of the ways in which they draw on their rich cultural heritage to confront and resist such global concerns facing them today. This is premised on the idea that the model of work presented by these local people can be an alternative to the destructive tendency of globalization. The researchers argue that the local communities in the periphery (in this case the Lumads in Surigao) continue to view work as means for the satisfaction of needs and, therefore, the championing of this philosophy of work would contribute greatly to cushioning, if not preventing, the inevitable impact of modern technology in particular and globalization in general. In light of the above argument, this paper is guided by the following questions:

1. What is work? How does the concept of work contribute to human and social development?
2. How do the Lumads in Surigao view work? What is their attitude toward work?
3. How does globalization, particularly modern technology, impact on the role and function of work in the Lumad community in Surigao?

2 METHODS

The researchers employed semi-ethnography as research design in this study. Ethnographic research design, according to Allen (2017), is a qualitative research method in which the ethnographers or researchers immerse themselves in a particular community or organization to observe the behavior of the members. It is also important to note that ethnographers actively participate in the community or organization to gain an insider’s perspective and to have experiences similar to the community members. The researchers for one used the term “semi-ethnography” in this study because they did not spend longer time immersing themselves in the Lumad communities in Surigao, one that is expected in “ethnography” in the strict sense of the word. The researchers were convinced that semi-ethnography is the most appropriate design in this study as they wanted to go to the Lumad communities in Surigao, particularly the Manobo and Mamanwa communities, and observe and learn the way they do things there (in addition to the data and insights gathered through interviews).

In addition to semi-ethnography, the researchers also employed archival research design. In fact, as will be shown later, the researchers visited the Mindanao Studies Center of the Ateneo de Davao University to acquire reliable documents on the history of the Lumad communities of Surigao, particularly the Manobo and Mamanwa communities.

The study was conducted in three Lumad areas in Surigao del Sur, namely, Lubo, Pantukan, and Lanuza. Lubo is a remote barangay in the municipality of Cantilan, in the province of Surigao del Sur. The household population of Lubo in the 2015 Census was 595, broken down into 121 households or an average of 4.92 members per household. This represented 2.76% of the total population of Cantilan. Lubo is situated at approximately 9.2874, 125.8164, in the island of Mindanao. Elevation at these coordinates is estimated at 539.0 meters or 1,768.4 feet above mean sea level (Lubo, n.d.).

Pantukan is also a relatively remote barangay in the municipality of Carrascal, in the province of Surigao del Sur. The household population of Pantukan in the 2015 Census was 737, broken down into 127 households or an average of 5.80 members per household. This represented 3.79% of the total population of Carrascal. Pantukan is situated at approximately 9.3717, 125.8308, in the island of Mindanao. Elevation at these coordinates is estimated at 292.4 meters or 959.3 feet above mean sea level (Pantukan, n.d.).

Lanuza is a coastal municipality in the province of Surigao del Sur. The municipality has a land area of 290.60 square kilometers or 112.20 square miles which constitutes 5.89% of Surigao del Sur’s total area. The household population of Lanuza in the 2015 Census was 12,000 broken down into 2,783 households or an average of 4.31 members per household. This represents 2.12% of

the total population of Surigao del Sur province, or 0.49% of the overall population of the Caraga region. Based on these figures, the population density is computed at 47 inhabitants per square kilometer or 122 inhabitants per square mile. The municipal center of Lanuza is situated at approximately 9° 1' North, 126° ' East, in the island of



Figure 1. Spot map of the research locale.

Mindanao. Elevation at these coordinates is estimated at 10.7 meters or 35.0 feet above mean sea level (Lanuza, n.d.).

The researchers chose these locales because they host two of the largest groups of indigenous peoples in the Philippines, namely, the Manobos and Mamanwas. Furthermore, the researchers chose the Manobos and Mamanwas as research subjects because they are some of the indigenous communities in the Philippines that have been directly impacted by the agents of globalizations, such as modern technology and mining and logging operations. In fact, some of the country's huge mining and logging companies have been operating in Surigao del Sur for decades already. It would have been better if the researchers included Lumads or Indigenous Peoples in other parts of Mindanao and the entire country, but given the timeframe and resources, the researchers focused only on the Manobos and Mamanwas in Surigao del Sur.

Interviews and participant-observations were employed as research instruments in this study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in groups (group interviews) with semi-structured interview guides. The researchers interviewed ten elders from each community: ten elders from the Manobo and Mamanwa communities in Lubo, ten elders from the Manobo and Mamanwa communities in Pantukan, and ten elders from Mamanwa communities in Lanuza. The researchers were convinced that these elders are "community experts" in their own right who can, with their particular wisdom, provide insights on the nature and dynamics of their philosophy of work. In these interviews, the participants' views on work and how it impacts their lives and the community were highlighted. The core questions in interview include the following:

Please talk briefly about your life and how do you earn a living?

1. What do you think is the importance of work in your life? Do you think you find satisfaction in your present work?
2. How would you compare the nature of work before (say in the past 25 or 30 years) and now?
3. How do people in your community organize work? Can you say that people in your community work cooperatively for the common good?
4. Do you think that work has contributed significantly to the development of your community?
5. What do you think is the impact of modern technology as an agent of globalization on your community and the way you view work?

The observation part focused on the way the Manobo and Mamanwa Indigenous Peoples behaved during and after the interviews, as well as in the conduct of their rituals. The researchers also had the chance to observe the overview of the Manobo and Mamanwa communities. Although they were just like a surface observation, the researchers had drawn valuable insights from them.

For the actual conduct of gathering data, the following were observed:

First, the researchers conducted archival research at the Mindanao Studies Center of the Ateneo de Davao University to acquire reliable documents on the history of the Lumad communities in Surigao, particularly the Manobo and Mamanwa communities.

Second, the researchers secured a Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) from the Office of the Regional Director of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in Butuan City in pursuant to the latter's Administrative Order No. 3 Series of 2012.

Third, the researchers went to Surigao to coordinate with the Municipal Tribal Chieftain of Carrascal, Datu Engwan Ala, with the aid of Mr. Ordonio P. Rocero Jr., the NCIP Acting Regional Director; Mr. Christopher Aying, Cantilan NCIP Service Center Head; and technical support staff: Brian Clavero, Ralph Lamanilao and Jonard Benito.

Fourth, the researchers, together with the NCIP regional representatives, conducted preliminary meetings (twice) with the Lumad Chieftains (Manobos and Mamanwas) informing them of the research's objectives.

Fifth, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed between the Lumad chieftains and the researchers, which the NCIP regional representatives facilitated.

Sixth, upon the consent of the Municipal Tribal Chieftain, Datu Engwan Ala, and the tribal chieftains, the researchers were then granted permission to enter the respective Lumad tribes to conduct the interviews and observations.

It is worth noting that before the researchers were finally allowed entry to the Lumad communities, certain rituals were performed, one of which was the offering of

live pigs to the diwata (god). The rituals were headed by a Babaylan (shaman) and some elders in the community to ask for blessings from the spirits/gods for the said endeavor. The photographs below show a ritual conducted in Pantukan, Carascal, Surigao del Sur

After the rituals, the Lumads prepared lunch for the researchers and the entire Manobo and Mamanwa communities, which was followed by the actual group interviews. It is also worth noting that through the rituals and the hikyad (banquet), the researchers were able to further establish rapport with the Lumads.



Figure 2. Three Babaylans in Pantukan, Carascal, Surigao del Sur together with the NCIP municipal representative performed the ritual.

Before each group interview was conducted, the researchers explained to the participants the interview protocol, which includes explaining to the participants the purpose of the interview, issues about confidentiality, and the flow of the interview. Permission was also sought from the participants that the interview will be recorded.

During the actual interview, one team member was assigned to ask the questions and take notes, while another member was assigned to take care of the non-verbal cues and draw insights from them. All the other members of the research team facilitate the entire interview process.

The recorded interviews were then saved in a USB and laptop to make sure that there are reserved copies of the recordings in case of data loss. Then the researchers transcribed the interviews and showed them to the participants for validity purposes. Below are some of the photos of the actual interviews.



Figure 2. Group interview with the Manobo and Mamanwa elders in Lubo, Cantillan, Surigao del Sur

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the core of the Manobos and Mamanwas' philosophy or notion of work is the idea that work plays a central role in their community. Of course, this is also true to other communities whether people are conscious of it or not. As already intimated above, work serves as a foundation of civilization and as one of the agents of human flourishing (Franssen, Lokhorst, & Van de Poel, 2009; see also Dusek, 2006, and Ihde, 2004). However, there is something peculiar about the Manobos and Mamanwas' notion of work which can be viewed as an alternative to destructive tendency of modern technology and globalization, that is, work for them is the means for the satisfaction of their needs. As a matter of fact, the Manobos and Mamanwas never thought of begging or depending on dole outs to survive. They do not even think of stealing or taking advantage of others to get what they need. It was in fact reiterated during the interviews that "hard work" is the key to survive. When asked how they view work, one respondent said: "Magkugi gyud para makakaon" which means, "we have to work hard so we can eat". As we can see, hard work teaches these Lumads discipline, dedication, and determination. Thus, as these Lumads would have us believe, it is only through hard work that we can achieve our goals in life.

While the capitalist-driven globalization also espouses the idea of hard work, it should not be confused with the Lumads' take on it. Again, for the Manobos and Mamanwas in Lubo, hard work is associated with the satisfaction of one's needs, a satisfaction that does not involve "oppression" as one can observe in industrialized societies. For instance, when asked about the purpose of money, one respondent quipped: "Ipalit ug pagkaon, sabon, asin..." which simply means, "in order to buy food, soap and salt". As we can see, the idea of consumerism as one of the defining features of modern technology and globalization (see Ankiewicz, De Swardt, & De Vries, 2006 and Hrynshyn, 2002) has not [yet] taken hold of the consciousness of the Manobos and Mamanwas. Of course, this is not to say that the said Lumads eschewed goods and services offered by capitalist-driven globalization. Maybe one day consumerism will get hold of their consciousness. But for now, and as what the researchers had observed, the Manobos and Mamanwas in Lubo considered work as means for the satisfaction of their needs as well as the needs of others given their collective identity.

It is worth noting, as a way of proving how important work is for the Manobos and Mamanwas in Lubo, that these Lumads go to their farms as early as 6:00am and return home around 4:00pm daily, except on Sundays when they have to rest. Some of them even leave at 4:00am. And most of these Lumads have their dinner at around 6:30pm, and then go to bed after. However, this is not to say that all of them are hardworking. There are in fact a few of them who are lazy and do not value the

importance of work. As the Manobo Datu said, there are some of them who are lazy, but he was quick to emphasize that they are just very few. This may be the consequence also of the depleting natural resources surrounding them of which their subsistence since time immemorial depended upon (Cutillas, 2021; see also Feiring, 2013).

Other proof that the Lumads view work as a means for the satisfaction of their needs and the needs of their community is their emphasis on hard work for the education of their children and hospitalization of the sick. In fact, it was reiterated many times during the interviews that if they only think of their (and the community's) basic needs like food, then the forest is enough; the forest as their source of food is enough for them to get by. In fact, if the Lumads just remain in their place, not thinking of life in the lowlands (town or city center), they are better off. But with the opportunities in the lowlands that entice them to embrace a more comfortable life, promised by education, health services, and modern technology, their struggle is doubled because they cannot afford them in the first place. They need money if monaog sila sa ubos (they go down to the town or city centers); they need money if they send their children to school; they need money if they bring their sick to the hospital. One respondent said: "Kun monaog sa ubos, mo-plete, mokaon, moinom...gasto gyud", which means "When we go the town, we spend for (motorcycle) fare, we eat, and we also drink...so it is expensive". This scenario is corroborated by studies on indigenous people in other parts of Mindanao like Bukidnon and Agusan (Prill-Brett, 2007). For example, in their seminal work titled "A Sketch of Western Bukidnon Manobo Farming Practices, Past and Present", Hires and Headland (1977) said that it was difficult for the Manobos to go down to the town or city center because they didn't have enough money.

Now, to see how the Manobos and Mamanwas' notion or philosophy of work (and their attitude toward it), poses itself as an alternative to the capitalist-driven globalization with modern technology as its agent, let us very briefly sketch how the latter impacted the Lumad communities. Let us start with the Manobos and Mamanwas' culture of sharing.

It is interesting to note that in the not-so-distant past, every time the Manobos and Mamanwas in Lubo caught *baboy ihalas* (wild pig), they normally shared the meat with the community. In fact, as the interviews reveal, the person who caught the wild pig even personally delivered the meat to the neighbor's house, who were called *kaigsuonan*, the local term for "brothers" which includes both kinsmen and friends in the community. With the advent of time, especially with the intrusion and penetration of modern technology as agents of globalization such as household appliances and modern gadgets in their communities, as well as their exposure to the lowlands, this practice has died out. When asked if they continue this practice of sharing, one respondent

sadly said: "*Wayá na jaon kuman, sir.*"⁸ He further said: "*Kun makababoy kaw, kun yay imo kwarta, imo man ibaligya....*"⁹ Another respondent said: "*Lahi na kuman, sir.*"¹⁰ Another respondent also said: "*Di man kay sauna, waya may kwarta...sauna, barato pa man gajud an palaliton...ugsa ipanghatag ra kan ang karne...tag 25 centavos pa man ang kilo sauna,*"¹¹ which roughly translates to "No, because before, there was no money; before, goods were really cheap; that is why we just gave the meat (of the wild pig); meat was just 25 centavos per kilo back then". The researchers would like to emphasize this point because it shows that, again, with the intrusion and penetration of modern technology as an agent of globalization in their community through the introduction of more and more goods whose prices are set by the capitalists themselves, the Lumads were gradually abandoning their culture of sharing. This is indeed a concrete instance of how globalization and modern technology impacted on the said Lumads in Lubo (which is also true in other indigenous communities in the country). It used to be that work for the Lumads is part of their community building, reminding us of the "cooperative" notion of work by Marx as well as by Freud. With capitalism coupled with unprecedented technological advancement, work becomes monetized. For the Lumads, throughout time, their work has a direct effect on others whether for their family or for their community. Recently, work of the Lumads tends to focus more on the family's own needs than the community's. And yet, the culture of sharing was never extinguished from their practices. This was evident during the participant-observation at the field when some Lumads in Lubo readily shared their root crops with the researchers.

On logging. Logging activities, especially commercial logging, as an agent of globalization has always been viewed as destructive to the environment because of its ill effects, such as deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and the emission of greenhouse gases. As Wenger et al. (2018; see also Rose, 2005) argue, logging of all types is indeed destructive to the environment. However, the Manobos and Mamanwas of Lubo have a somewhat practical approach to the issue of logging. While they seem to acknowledge that logging will destroy their environment, based on our interviews and observations, it appeared that they favored the presence of logging in the past, except for their fear of the logging companies' private army and concessions guards. In fact, it was through these logging activities that roads from the town center to this very remote community were opened. With this development, the Lumads were able to transport their goods to the town center with relative ease. They did not have to walk for miles and traverse mountains with steep slopes. On the other hand, they were also nostalgic of the time when there was an abundance of food around them during the pre-logging time. Overall, the negative impact of logging on these Lumads communities was

counterbalanced by good effects. Indeed, the Lumads benefited from the logging industry in their land. As a matter of fact, one respondent said that many of them were able to send their children to school because of the economic implications of logging in their communities. And because some of them have been educated, as one respondent quipped, they could no longer be easily duped (by the lowlanders). As one respondent said: "...*dili na kay edukado naman. Daghan nan naka-eskwela*"¹² which means, "...no longer because we are educated. Many have gone to school already".

Lastly, on one major impact of globalization and modern technology on the Mamanwa people. It must be noted that unlike the Manobos, the Mamanwas were once nomadic (though many of them settled in one place today). They practiced *kaingin* (swidden) farming as inherited from their ancestors. So, they stayed in one place for quite a while, and when the soil was no longer fertile, they moved to another place and did other *kaingin* farming. They will return to the abandoned place once the soil has rejuvenated and do *kaingin* farming again. However, as we learned from the interviews, when someone or a kinsman died in a certain place, the Mamanwas will abandon the place and will never return. According to the Mamanwas, this has been the standard practice before. However, with the advent of globalization, with modern technology and mining and logging as its agents, the territory of the Mamanwas (and Manobos) shrunk considerably resulting in their limited movement. In fact, vast tracts of land have now been devoted to mining. What we can draw from this is that because of the limited space, the Mamanwas will now return to a previously abandoned farm even if someone died there. Although indirectly, we can say that indeed this change in the Mamanwas' practice can be considered as a result of modern technology as an agent of globalization (Chisa & Huskins, 2014).

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The overall insight that we can draw from the above discussion is that the Manobos and Mamanwas' philosophy or notion of work and their attitude toward it, that is, "work" as a means for the satisfaction of their needs and the needs of their community, can be considered as an alternative to the destructive tendency of modern technology as agent of globalization. As is well known, the capitalist-driven economic globalization with modern technology as well as mining and logging operations as its agents owes part of its continued existence to the production of more and more unnecessary goods and services and the concomitant lavish consumption on the part of the privileged strata. Economic globalization, therefore, promotes greed and individualism at the expense of sharing and community.

Given that this form of domination, that is, technological domination, is cultural in nature, then the alternative must be cultural as well. Again, this is where the Manobos and Mamanwas' philosophy of work comes in. Their notion of work as a means for the satisfaction of (basic) needs, such as education and health, and the needs of others, can directly undermine the capitalist's individualist culture. This simple, yet powerful, philosophy of work points to "what is needed" in the face of the production of unnecessary goods, to "what is enough" in the face of lavish consumption. Indeed, the researchers argue that the local communities in the periphery (in this case the Lumads in Surigao) continue to view work as a means for the satisfaction of needs and, therefore, the championing of this philosophy of work would contribute greatly to cushioning, if not preventing, the inevitable impact of modern technology and globalization — "inevitable" in the sense that there is no way that people can stop globalization. Sooner or later, globalization, aided with modern technology as its primary agent, will finally intrude and penetrate all parts of the world. However, humans can somehow take part of this development and, again, cushion the dialectical movement of modern technology and globalization including its negative implications (Crampton, 2015; Ernston & Sorlin, 2013; and Aggarwal, 2011; see also Alburo et. al., 2018). The current problem of depleting natural resources with the consequent climate change is clearly a result of a disordered priority over profit than people in a capitalist society. The Lumads in Surigao is giving the world an alternative work ethic that focuses on the good of oneself (read: satisfaction of one's needs, not wants!) and the good of the community.

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