

Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition and its Relevance to the Lumads' Struggle for Social Justice in Surigao

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Introduction

The main goal of this proposed research project is to contribute to the attempt of the Lumads in Surigao to create a better community as expressed most visibly in their struggle for social justice and equality. In doing so, we will critically investigate the nature and dynamics of such struggle in the light of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. Honneth's (2003) theory of recognition is particularly relevant in this case as it highlights the centrality of the experience of "injustice" as the basis of a form of social critique that points to the idea of emancipation. We will argue that the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality is morally justified—and thus deserves due recognition—inasmuch as it is acknowledged from the outset that the Lumads have been displaced through the intrusion and penetration by the agents of economic globalization, such as the mining and logging companies. We will argue further that the Lumads in Surigao are entitled to their right of self-determination as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Our proposed research project, therefore, will not only contribute in the production of knowledge for "knowledge's sake". For sure, our proposed research project will help promote a more humane and just Lumad community in Surigao through the production of social critique grounded in Honneth's theory of recognition. We are convinced that "recognizing" the basic and inalienable rights of the Lumads would significantly contribute in the promotion of social justice and equality in their community.

Research Issues

This proposed research project will deal with three main issues, namely, 1) the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality; 2) Axel Honneth's theory of recognition; and 3) the relevance of Honneth's theory of recognition to the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality.

Firstly, recent history shows that the Lumads in Surigao have been severely marginalized by the agents of economic globalization, such as the mining and logging companies (Alamon 2018). In particular, the mining companies in Surigao had displaced the Lumad communities, forcing the latter to stage a series of protests in the attempt to protect their rights to ancestral domain. Today, as we may already know, the Lumads in Surigao have boldly brought their struggle to the political sphere by marching the streets and even appealing to the international community to demand for the recognition of their rights. In fact, in one occasion, the Lumads in Surigao staged a lightning rally at the Sofitel, Manila, where representatives of the mining sector were holding a conference (Espiritu 2017). This move by the Lumads to demand for the recognition of their rights was met with brutalities perpetrated by some paramilitary forces believed to be working with the mining companies. In fact, several Lumads leaders have been killed recently. According to Arnold P. Alamon (2018) of the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, 71 Lumad leaders have been killed from 2010 to 2015, not to mention the 95 cases of attacks against 87 alternative schools for indigenous children recently. Truly, these forms of social injustice have inspired the researchers to ambitiously attempt to critically investigate the nature and dynamics of the Lumads' struggle for recognition of their rights to ancestral domain. We call this struggle a "struggle" for social justice and equality.

Secondly, one of the fundamental positions of this proposed research project is to study the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality from the vantage point of critical theory. Critical theory in this study is understood as a specific form of critique that centers on social pathologies, for example, the experience of injustice, and at the same time points to the idea of emancipation (Honneth 1991). Inasmuch as the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality can be best staged through a struggle for recognition, Axel Honneth's model of critical social theory is particularly relevant. Honneth's (2009) model of critical social theory centers on the idea of "recognition", arguing that the prevalence of social injustice and inequality that persons or groups experience is due mainly to misrecognition—misrecognition of the basic rights that are due them (the Lumads in this case). For Honneth, according to Deranty (2009), the disenfranchised groups have to struggle for such recognition in order to attain a more

humane and just society. In doing so, the Lumads may appeal to the Philippine government and the international community, for example, the United Nations (UN) or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for a possible intervention.

Lastly, we will attempt to apply Honneth's theory of recognition to the Lumad community in Surigao, with emphasis on how this theory could help the Lumad population articulate the possibility of emancipation, that is to say, promote a more humane and just community. Although it would seem that Honneth's theory is Eurocentric (Deranty 2007), as his model of social critique centers on societies at the "center" of the global spectrum, we are convinced that it could be meaningfully applied to societies "at the margins" given that the key Honnethian categories of recognition, misrecognition, the experience of injustice, rights, and emancipation are categories that also embed societies at the margins, especially the Lumad community in Surigao.

Research Content and Methodology

The content of this proposed research project will be threefold:

- Part I:** Historical and critical analysis of the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality in Surigao.
- Part II:** Reconstruction of Honneth's theory of recognition.
- Part III:** Applying Honneth's theory of recognition to the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality in Surigao.

On the one hand, Part I will be devoted to a critical analysis of the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality in Surigao by tracing the historical development of such struggle. It will start with a critical analysis on how the Lumads as a tribal community have been disenfranchised through the intrusion and penetration by the agents of economic globalization. On the other hand, this part will analyze the way the Lumads responded to such aggression. To meaningfully and fruitfully do this, we will conduct an archival research at the Mindanao Studies Center of the Ateneo de Davao University in order to acquire reliable documents on the history of the Lumad community in Surigao and their struggle for recognition. As is well known, the Mindanao Studies Center of the Ateneo de Davao University is one of the biggest repositories of information about the history, nature, and dynamics of the Lumad communities in Mindanao and the Lumad community in Surigao in particular.

Part II will be devoted to a holistic and critical reconstruction of Honneth's theory of recognition. The emphasis here will be on Honneth's (2008) concepts of rights,

recognition and misrecognition, respect and disrespect, social hope, and emancipation. These concepts are very much applicable to the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality inasmuch as this struggle is viewed primarily as a struggle for "recognition". In doing so, we will employ textual analysis as a method in understanding Honneth's theory of recognition. However, we are aware that Honneth's model of critical theory is huge and can be applied to a number of cases. For this reason, we will focus mainly on Honneth's theory of "recognition".

Part III will attempt to apply Honneth's theory of recognition to the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality. In other words, this part will attempt to link theory and practice, arguing that the Lumads' struggle for recognition would become more meaningful and practically viable if it is guided by a sound and relevant theory. In order to do this, we will spend at least a month (spread throughout the academic year) in the Lumad community in Surigao to do ethnographic study and interview. This method will allow us to experience firsthand and understand holistically and more meaningfully the nature and dynamics of the socio-economic, cultural, and political condition of the Lumads in Surigao. We will also inquire into the way in which the Lumad responded to the intrusion and penetration by the forces of economic globalization. As a crucial part of the ethnographic study, we will conduct interviews with ten (10) leaders or elders and members of those social movements in the Lumad community who are directly connected to the bigger campaign for social justice and equality.

The Respondents and the Study Area

The respondents of this study are the Lumads in Surigao del Sur. They formed an organization called Mapasu or Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod/ Preserving Struggle for the Next Generation. Most of them are found in the hinterlands of barangay Diatagon and Lianga. They are also found in outskirts of the municipalities of San Augustine, San Miguel, Tago and Marihatag.

The diocese of Tandag helped them built their own school: for grade school, Trifpss or Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao del Sur and high school, Alcadev or Alternative Center for Agricultural Development.

Ethical Consideration of the Study

Before the conduct of the study, a Prior Informed Consent (PIC) will be secured from the Chieftain of the Lumads. Full disclosure of the Study will be explained to

respondents. Individual Consent (IC) from each respondent will be voluntarily secured. Anyone who refuses to participate in the interview shall be excluded from the survey.

Research Output and Communication Strategy

The expected outcome of this proposed research project will be in the form of a journal article. We aim to publish the output of this proposed research project either in Asian studies journal or Critical Theory journal. This communication and outreach strategy is a very effective way of disseminating the final product of the project. In this way, cause-oriented groups and policy makers in the Philippines will have a better understanding of the Lumad communities in Surigao and their struggle for social justice and equality. With this communication and outreach strategy, the effect of this proposed research project will be threefold, namely: first, a better, more nuanced, understanding of contemporary social and political issues in the indigenous communities in Mindanao through the production of a critical assessment of the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality; second, the enhancement and promotion of theory-building and the issue of bridging the gap between theory and practice; and, lastly, to contribute to the promotion of social justice and the articulation of social hope and emancipation in the indigenous communities in Mindanao, particularly the Lumads of Surigao.

References

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RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Questions for the Focus Group Discussion

The researchers will provide each participant copies of informed consent and confidentiality forms before the focus group discussion begins. The facilitator will read the informed consent and confidentiality forms aloud in case some of the participants cannot read. The discussion will be done in the local dialect, that is, Cebuano, which is also the mother tongue of the researchers. The researchers will see to it that the participants are provided with an opportunity to ask any questions.

The researchers will start the discussion by explaining to the participants the ground rules of the focus group discussion, that is, there are no right or wrong answers and that they are free to be frank and share their point of view. The researchers will then proceed by asking the interviewee(s) about some of the activities she or he carries out as a leader in the community. The researchers will ask about issues related to the Lumads' struggle for social justice and equality. Below are the questions for the focus group discussion, and follow up questions might be raised in relation to certain answers.

1. Please talk briefly about your life, and tell us about your role in this community.
2. We learned that you and your fellow Lumads in this community have been staging protests against the presence of mining and logging companies. Tell us why you are protesting against these mining and logging companies.
3. What kind of experiences has your community had with these mining and logging companies?
4. In your view, what are the most important issues related to the presence of mining and logging companies in your community? Are the Lumad community members aware of these issues?
5. What has the Lumad community response been since the presence of these mining and logging companies?
6. Going back to the issue on protest. We understand that you will not bravely march the streets if you don't have some demands from these mining and logging companies. Can you tell us what are you demanding from them?
7. Do you think it is necessary to stage a protest in order to get what you demand? What about lodging your complain to the court or to any proper authority instead of going to the streets and protest?
8. How do you view the government in relation to these issues? Do you think the government has been very supportive of you?

9. What do you think is the best alternative to the problems that your community is facing now? In other words, what do you think should be done to promote social justice and equality in your community?
10. Do you have any comments? Do you have something to say in addition to your answers to our questions?

Project Timeline

March 2019 to December 2019

Activity	Months									
	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Processing of Permits (PIC)										
Procurement of materials										
Archival research at the Mindanao Studies Center, Ateneo de Davao University										
Conduct ethnographic study in Surigao										
Writing the first part of the research paper										
Writing the second part of the research project (that is, reconstruction of Axel Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition)										
Writing the third part of research paper										
Doing the finishing touches of the entire research manuscript										

Detailed Budget

Personnel Services

Project Leader	1 X P2500/mo X 10 months	25,000.00
Co-researchers	3 X P2000/mo X 10 months	60,000.00
		=====
		85,000.00

Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses

Transportation and Travelling Expenses		
(Transportation = P3,000x 4pax x 2 (back & forth) x 3 trips)		72,000.00
(Per Diems = 4 pax x 800/day x 21 days)		67,000.00
Supplies (Bond papers, inks, ticklers, pencils, pens, USB, envelopes/bags, audio recorder)		20,800.00
Communication		5,000.00
		=====
		P 139,200.00

GRAND TOTAL **P250, 000.00**

Profile of Proponents

Anesito L. Cutillas is an Associate Professor at Cebu Technological University handling Philosophy subjects both in the Graduate School and in the undergraduate programs. He is currently taking up MA Philosophy at Silliman University and took up his AB Philosophy at the Rogationist Seminary College- Cebu which is affiliated to the University of San Jose-Recoletos. He previously served as the Chair of the Social Sciences Department, and Dean of the Graduate School. His research interests in on Social Sciences and currently in Philosophy.

Hemres M. Albuero is a Full Professor at Cebu Technological University handling courses in research, Forestry and Public Administration. He has a background in Forestry and obtained a degree of Master in Arts in Public Administration at the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan as a fellow of the Japanese Grant-Aide for Human Resource Development Scholarship. He was working on a research on Community-Based Biodiversity Conservation. His other research interests is on birds and bats.

Raymond Montero-Ambray is the parochial vicar of Holy Child Parish in Lingig, Surigao del Sur. He obtained his MA in Anthropology in Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City. He took his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at the Rogationist Seminary College, Labangon, Cebu City in 1998. Cuurently he is a member of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines and Caraga Watch. He has been active in philosophical research presentations in various conferences talking about “Negotiating Cultural Citizenship in the language of the New Social Movements, an Indigenous Peoples’ struggle in the hinterlands of Surigao del Sur.”

Jeffrey Ocaj is currently a Full Professor of Philosophy at Silliman University, Dumaguety City. He obtained his doctoral degree in Philosophy from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia in 2013 and a postdoctorate from Frankfurt University, Germany in 2016. He obtained his master’s degree in Philosophy from the University of San Carlos, Cebu City in 2005 and a second master’s degree in History from Silliman University in 2007. He previously served as Chair of the Philosophy Department at Silliman University for 2 years and Associate Dean of the same Institution for 4 years. He has served as Coordinator of the Villanova Institute, University of San Agustin, Iloilo and Editor of the *Augustinian Journal*. He is a member of the Editorial Collaborative of *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* and member of the editorial Board of *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*. He is also a regular reviewer of the *Humanities Diliman* of the University of the Philippines and *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* of the Ateneo de Manila University. He edited recently the book *Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person* published by Subverso.