

Tribute

Maureen C. Pagaduan
(November 22, 1952–August 11, 2020):
Close Encounters with a Friend, Colleague,
and Comrade

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I have known, and have been friends with, Maureen C. Pagaduan for over forty years. For most of those years, we were practically neighbors—our houses were just three blocks apart in a middle-class neighborhood that was a public housing project in Quezon City. The timeline of our friendship, however, was erratic and inconsistent with gaps in between due to our sometimes diverse pursuits and

focuses. This tribute to her, therefore, covers only the years when our encounters were close and interactive.

First Encounter: Early Researches

My first “close encounter” with Maureen was in 1977, when we both held office at the La Ignaciana Apostolic Center (LIAC) in Sta. Ana, Manila. I was then working as a researcher for the Maryknoll Fathers Justice and Peace Committee (JPC) which had an office at the ground floor of LIAC. My task was to investigate various issues and programs affecting the lives of ordinary people. The JPC head, Fr. John Dowling, M.M., informed me that a Fr. John Doherty, S.J. was working on related issues and perhaps I should talk to him. Doherty conveniently had a research office on the second floor of LIAC. Without bothering to make an appointment, I climbed the building’s stone stairways and knocked on Doherty’s office door. Imagine my surprise when instead of a white American priest, I saw behind an enormous desk, a young, charming, and smiling Filipina who introduced herself as Maureen Pagaduan. She was friendly and very accommodating as we exchanged notes on what our respective research outfits were doing.

Maureen shared that she was assisting Doherty compile information on interlocking directorates among the country’s top 1,000 corporations. The study was being funded by the Maryknoll Fathers. I was impressed by her enthusiasm and knowledge on the issue. I was then doing research on Japanese interests in the Philippine fishing industry, an ongoing burning issue regarding a Navotas fish port upgrading project funded by the Japan-led Asian Development Bank that would displace informal fish port workers (i.e., the *batilyos*). As we went about our parallel research work, Maureen and I continued to exchange notes, insights, and observations.

The Doherty research was eventually published in 1979 as “A Preliminary Study of Interlocking Directorates Among Financial, Commercial, and Service Enterprises in the Philippines.” The study showed how only sixty families have “influence and control over an economy of close to fifty million people” through interlocking directorates among themselves and with multinational corporations (Doherty 1979). Unfortunately, the study remained a preliminary research effort and no further investigations followed.

In 1988, Maureen published an article in the *Community Development Journal* on “Mindanao Peasant Women: A Participatory Research Investigation of their Realities and Potentials.” This was a product of consultation with and training of peasant women conducted by Maureen, together with the Women Studies and Resource Center (WSRC) and the Network for Participatory Development (NPD). It was basically an inquiry into the conditions of peasant women in Mindanao and was a “concomitant consciousness-raising discussion by and among women through the means of participatory research” (Pagaduan 1988, 195). In this article, Maureen laid the foundations of her own understanding of participatory research as a process of not merely interpreting reality, but changing it:

The pressing need [is] for studies which can enlighten the transformation path through concepts and methods that identify with and articulate the world view of the poor, deprived and oppressed [as] the locus and catalyst for participatory research development. The assumption [is that] in the past, knowledge has been concentrated in the hands of the few; information collected for policy makers and funding agencies... viewed knowledge as a commodity to sell; [with] the outcome [being]... scholarly papers which have little or no impact... in the lives of its subjects.

Participatory research calls for a “democratic interaction” between the social scientist and the people he or she claims to study. The people are not regarded as subjects of research endeavors but as active participants in the research process. The researchers... [are not] experts who can control the decisions on the focus and method of study, but rather as co-learners and facilitators, willing to listen and help, and if necessary, join them in action. (ibid.)

Second Encounter: A Regional Network of Scholar-Activists

My second close encounter with Maureen took place in the 1990s with the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), a Hong Kong-based network of Asian scholar-activists promoting alternative paradigms and development strategies. Back then, I was

the ARENA executive director. Upon invitation, Maureen agreed to be a member of ARENA's Council of Fellows, the network's highest policy and decision-making body. In this capacity she took part in a project on "Economic Restructuring and Asian Women," which aimed to look at globalization, its accompanying economic restructuring, and their impact on the lives of women in Asia. The project aimed to fill a gap in studies where grand narratives have generally neglected to recount how "ordinary peoples, and especially marginalized people such as women resist, survive, question economic restructuring," and in the process "create their own histories of courage and survival" (Butalia 1995, vii). The study produced case studies on South China-Hong Kong, South Korea, India, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Maureen and two other colleagues (Dazzle Rivera and Ann Dizon) collaborated in producing the Philippine country study. Along with the other country studies, this was published in a 1995 issue of *Asian Exchange*, ARENA's biannual journal. The joint article documented the state of Philippine poverty in the 1990s, "the global integration of women and women's work, and the increasing vulnerability of urban poor women and their families, and the challenges ahead of battling national, class, and gender oppression" (Pagaduan, Rivera, and Dizon 1995, 187-90). From this macro perspective, the article zeroed in on the life stories of three women: an urban poor resident working as a counsellor for abused women, a widow working as a vendor and laundrywoman, and a single-parent seamstress in a factory who eventually became a leader in an urban poor community (Pagaduan, Rivera, and Dizon 1995).

Maureen's next major involvement with ARENA was a series of workshops motivated by the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing that ended with a book project. The workshops tackled "the role of the state in reinforcing patriarchies, its links with the corporate, religious and military sectors, and also, at some level, its attempts to involve women's groups and non-governmental organizations... to join with it in improving the conditions of women's lives, but often with the opposite results" (Butalia, Magno, and Lau 1997, 8).

Maureen and Josefa Francisco wrote the Philippine country study in the 1997 book that ARENA subsequently published, entitled *Resurgent Patriarchies: Challenges for Women's Movements in Asia*. The

paper begins in a no-holds-barred way (Pagaduan and Francisco 1997, 15):

In the Philippines, the dominant tradition of feminist analysis of patriarchy—i.e. Filipino women's subordination by Filipino men—is one which is inextricably intertwined with a critical analysis of the historical and material roots of the colonization of the Filipino people and underdevelopment of the Philippine economy. At the center of the analysis is the concept of the sexual division of labor: a historically constructed system of assigning activities, functions and responsibilities to women and men. The way Filipino women and men participate and relate with each other in production and politics or the “public” domain as well as in the family-household and sexual relationships or the “private” sphere, is explained in terms of how an entrenched system and the ideology of the sexual division of labor is institutionalized in society, and internalized by everyone through ideology mediating mechanisms and processes.

The writers point out that even among the poor, gender oppression via the sexual division of labor permeates, where “poor Filipino women are impacted differentially from poor Filipino men by economic and political processes associated with global capitalism” and that “unlike their male counterparts, Filipino women continue to bear the combined pressure of economic production and domestic reproduction” (Pagaduan and Francisco 1997, 16).

Taking off from this perspective, the two authors then meticulously guide the reader on a tour-de-force that “combines the critical-structuralist and psycho-cultural views on women's labor migration, offers a number of other images that draw from the personal strengths and acts of resistance by women migrants and which could be used to support their quest for more control over their lives as women freeing themselves from the fetters of patriarchy and of unjust structural relations and hierarchies” (Pagaduan and Francisco 1997, 30).

It was at this point when Maureen and I briefly reconnected in, of all places, Beijing during the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Maureen and I joined other delegates to the conference's NGO Forum in attending seminars and workshops,

taking our lunches together, and even participating in an open-air demonstration of T'ai chi ch'üan led by Sister Mary John Mananzan. Toward the end of the conference, we got then ABC News Bureau Chief Chito Sta. Romana to take us on a tour of the city. This tour ended rather strangely at a local branch of the Hard Rock Café where young Chinese patrons vigorously swayed to loud Western rock music but at the stroke of 12 midnight, abruptly stopped their gyrations and silently headed for the exit.

Maureen continued her involvement with ARENA programs by participating in the network's "Marriage Migrant Project" at the turn of the millennium. The project's objectives were to (1) investigate the situation of marriage-migrant women in both sending and receiving countries in Asia, (2) build a network of activists and researchers working in this field, (3) develop joint action agenda and programs for the network, (4) develop an alternative understanding of citizenship to strengthen the network, and (5) hold an ARENA Regional School on this issue.

On Academics and Social Movements

As can be gleaned from her writings, Maureen was not just a scholar and an academic but a practicing and committed social activist as well. Her views on these twin pursuits were laid out in a forum on "The Academe and Social Movements: Enriching Theory and Practice" organized by the University of the Philippines (UP) Third World Studies Center and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on June 21-22, 2006. She started off by decrying academics who, in an uncivilized manner, spend their time warring with each other especially on professionalism issues and promotion concerns. She also noted that "the contribution of the University of the Philippines to development problems and solutions has been rather patchy" (Pagaduan 2006).

Maureen recognized that social movements "need writers and people who have the luxury to read books, theorize, and study... [and therefore] academics can play a significant role in providing instruments, mechanisms, and theoretical insights" (ibid.) But before that role can be played properly, "he or she needs to embrace the

movement first... and cannot view himself or herself as a separate entity, as an academic alone” (ibid.).

Our uniqueness as an academic community that places a high value on objectivity, with the tendency not to align with any group, has to be abandoned if we enter the movement. If the academic does not have a specific standpoint or commitment to causes, how can he or she be credible as a consultant? (ibid.)

Finally, Maureen issues an appeal to academics “to inspire their students to be committed to social change, to be critical of the path towards attaining a better life for the majority of Filipinos so that they do not have to be... struggling to work abroad” (ibid.).

If we inspire them to join social movements, not the corporate world and call centers... and if we expose our students to the movement, then teaching becomes an inspiration. Those are the indicators of our achievement as teachers. (ibid.)

Third and Last Encounter: Search for Development Alternatives

My third and last close encounter with Maureen took place in mid-2017. I was in the process of setting up the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies’ Program on Alternative Development (UP CIDS AltDev). I had the concept and the vision on hand but had few ideas on how to go about its implementation. The program’s concept consisted of initially documenting alternative and heterodox practices of Southeast Asian peoples on the ground, which went against existing mainstream and dominant paradigms of development and social action. The ultimate goal was to devise a new model of regional integration based on these alternative practices and eventually establish a Southeast Asian peoples’ regional integration network.

I needed help from university colleagues who have had long and sustained engagements with local communities undertaking such alternative practices. Knowing Maureen’s community organizing work with the UP College of Social Work and Community Development

(CSWCD), as well as with a civil society organization, the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB), I arranged a meeting with her and asked for her assistance. To my absolute delight, she agreed and, in the process, took the other major role in setting up the AltDev Program. As supervisor of the CSWCD Department of Community Development's (DCD) Field Instruction Program (FIP) she brought two of her close DCD colleagues to join AltDev: Assistant Professor Venarica Papa and Assistant Professor Karl Hapal.

The three scholar-activists developed AltDev's partnerships with three local communities that FIP worked with and thus greatly expanded and cemented the program's engagement and cooperation with indigenous societies and grassroots women's organizations. The three communities are Bantay Kalusugang Pampamayanan (BKP), Maigting na Samahan ng Panlipunang Negosyante sa Towerville (Igting) (both located in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan), and an Ayta Mag-indi ancestral domain in Porac, Pampanga. At the same time, Maureen also arranged to establish a formal partnership between the UP CIDS AltDev and CSWCD in relation to our program objectives and projects.

One important result of the above partnership was a 2019 UP CIDS AltDev Discussion Paper on "Doing Research with Grassroots Organizations: A Participatory Action Research (PAR)-inspired Approach" which Maureen co-authored with Karl Hapal and Venarica Papa. The paper documents the three authors' experiences in organizing and doing research with their respective FIP partner grassroots organizations. In many ways, the paper's assumptions and analyses closely mirrored and further developed Maureen's previous 1988 journal article on participatory research.

We were confronted with several issues and questions as we began to discuss our approach. Our academic, activist, and personal standpoints led us to believe that documentation and research are not solely a knowledge generation enterprise, nor does it strictly serve practical or utilitarian purposes. Instead, we were resolute with the belief that documentation and research must also be empowering for its participants. Given these, we asked: How do we approach the documentation process in such a way that our partners do not become mere objects of the study? How do we make our partners own the process and buy-

in to the larger agenda of the program? How do we make the documentation process relevant to their work? How do we make the process enriching and empowering for our partners? To address these questions, we turned to Community Development (CD) and drew from participation action research (PAR) for inspiring our perspectives and strategies. (Hapal, Pagaduan, and Papa 2019, 3)

Maureen and her two co-authors, however, also critiqued conventional and traditional notions of PAR. They point out that while conventional PAR sees “the articulation and use of local knowledge through participatory means” as “only tangentially related to changing conditions in the community or society,” the three see this exercise as already “PAR’s transformative agenda—people having the confidence with their knowledge and contesting other claims” (ibid., 19). Secondly, “while PAR possesses liberative and transformative visions... it appears that the approach has failed to gain traction in terms of penetrating the ivory tower of the academia” (ibid., 20). To this, it is also pointed out that some “participatory research processes... [still] end up assuming a researcher-respondent relationship despite the use of participatory data-gathering techniques” (ibid.). The essentializing of the PAR process is also questioned, where the emphasis is on processual issues and thus becomes wholly prescriptive. As an antidote, the ingredient of “embeddedness” is offered where integration with communities are undertaken and the language and local culture learned and internalized before, during, and after the PAR process (ibid., 20–21).

Maureen was delighted by this seminal publication on PAR as it now constitutes a basic document to guide the research and documentation work of AltDev. She was also highly appreciative of the AltDev project. In an email message to me on January 3, 2019, she wrote: “The best memory so far of 2018 is the project and its effects on Igting and BKP people. Here’s to a more powerful AltDev program.”

Maureen gave the opening address at the “Second Southeast Asian Conference on Alternatives: Building Peoples’ Movements Towards an Alternative Model of Regionalism” organized by AltDev on October 22–24, 2019 in Quezon City. Participants came from grassroots and civil society organizations from Laos, Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Her speech was pregnant with meaningful and valuable insights and bold challenges.



Maureen Pagaduan delivering the opening address in the “2nd Southeast Asian Conference on Alternatives” held last October 22–24, 2019

Little did we know at that time that it was to be Maureen’s last public speaking appearance. Within this context, allow me then to dissect her speech in greater detail.

As was her usual self, she viewed her talk as “sitting down” and “starting discussion points” with her listeners. After being out of the public view for some months as she underwent various treatment procedures for her ailment, the event, and her role in it was “a coming out ... after not being out for some time” (Pagaduan 2020). Pleasantries over, she then plunged into a sharp and self-critical analyses of “development”:

It is a very interesting word—alternative. I mentioned to the AltDev program this morning that I am happy and not so happy with that word. Because don’t you think alternative is a very inclusive word? It could possibly include a whole group of development workers, NGOs, development activists, advocates, grassroots leaders, people’s organizations—a whole lot! Which spells like a big people’s social movement. It speaks of variety, multiplicity, [and] difference. It spells more of vibrancy, dynamism, [and] loudness of voice, especially numbers. And

these should be enough, right? But is this all we want? Is this all we can achieve? What are our goals? And how can we be more strategic? (ibid.)

Maureen then challenged the participants “to rise higher and go for more” in the light of “existing aggressive threats to democracies” which, at the same time, are deceptively “attractive and enticing... especially to the disappointed, the frustrated and angry, across generations, from the poor to the elite” (ibid.). The times, therefore, call “for us to synthesize our experiences, look at our faults, and identify what sets us apart” (ibid.).

What is aggressive when it comes to our point of view? What is attractive? What entices? What could animate the communities to come together and sustain a people’s social movement? We have to be assessing as the threats in the system [are] as animating. We have to start debates, not fear our differences. We have to continue the theoretical discourses to expose, to root out, to discover the undiscovered, unexplored meanings and challenges of the new times, the new technologies, the new movements. (ibid.)

Maureen called for “new names, new labels, new brands, new meanings” and perhaps even “an alternative to the alternative” in order to “bring out clearer ideas, clearer directions, clearer bases for unities” in order to “make ourselves stronger and more strategic” (ibid.). She also delved into the challenge of networking, which, though “attractive and enticing,” also has its challenges due “to concerns over leadership, sustainability, and authenticity of our people’s movement” (ibid.).

For a network of people’s social movements, one has to capacitate and build leadership. The young must take their seats as leaders and seniors must continue to enlighten, lend a hand, hold each other’s hand, but otherwise step aside. The communities of the poor marginalized and oppressed must be enabled to equally take their leading positions. (ibid.)

Maureen relentlessly bombarded her listeners with a litany of piercing questions for them to respond to, if not in the conference, to take back home with them and mull over.

How do we continue sharing? What are most accessible, most affordable, most effective structures and strategies? How do we keep the fire burning—what sort of renewable energy can sustain us, keep us in touch, contribute and grow stronger together? Our principles must show that our beliefs are consistent with our practices. How do we live our democracies in our networks, our people’s movements? How are we transparent and accountable? What are our structures in decision-making? Do we have better alternatives to better consensus-building, approaches to a better “majority rules” principle, to better de-centered structures, to a better democracy in our practices? (ibid.)

With her soft voice firm and her ideas crystal clear, Maureen ended what was to be her valedictory address with a message about “the power of two—belief and imagination”:

In my past year of challenges, I drew upon strengths in this power of two. Often than not, our practices are driven and inspired by a collective imagination of a future for all. It is as well energized and sustained by a belief—a belief in people, basically, a belief in opportunities to come, a belief in the potential that we will all live in dignity, equality, justice, and peace. The future is beautiful. (ibid.)

The Final Months

Maureen had been struggling with pancreatic cancer since 2018. She underwent chemotherapy and other nontraditional healing methods as well. The side effects of the chemotherapy, however, took a terrible toll on her, both physically and emotionally. Toward the latter part of 2019, she thought she was getting better, and tests indicated that she could be in a remission. She felt well enough to go out and even drive. She continued to monitor the activities of AltDev and participated in the October conference where, on “solidarity night,” she joyfully sang and danced to her heart’s content. She even joined her husband, *Inquirer* Associate Editor Pergentino “Jun” Bandayrel Jr., on a two-day business trip to Antique in November.

In my mind, I really thought she was going to survive because three of her sisters also had other types of cancer who then recovered. I kept assuring her that, even though it appeared that their family genetic make-up made them prone to the disease, it also seemed to me that the same genetic make-up would enable all of them to survive the illness (as what happened to her siblings). I do not know from what part of my brain I procured that logic. Perhaps, it was just a desperate defense and denial mechanism on my part.

On her birthday last November 22, 2019, despite being a nonbeliever, I sent her a framed photo of a traditional Buddhist prayer which had the following poignant and stimulating thoughts on healing based on the power of one's innate goodness:

Just as the soft rains fill the streams,
pour into the rivers, and join together in the oceans,
so may the power of every moment of your goodness
flow forth to awaken and heal all beings—
those here now, those gone before, those yet to come.

By the power of every moment of your goodness,
may your heart's wishes be soon fulfilled
as completely shining as the bright full moon,
as magically as by a wish-fulfilling gem.

By the power of every moment of your goodness,
may all dangers be averted and all disease be gone.
May no obstacle come across your way.
May you enjoy fulfillment and long life.

For all in whose heart dwells respect,
who follow the wisdom and compassion, of the Way,
may your life prosper in the four blessings
of old age, beauty, happiness, and strength.

On February 21, 2020, I sent her a text message inquiring how she was. Her response sent chills down my spine: "Not so good news, Ed. *Nag recur sa lymph node sa pancreas uli.* [It recurred in my lymph nodes and pancreas.] Will do radiation again next week. Haay!" On March 24, she expressed sorrow over the news of Aileen Baviera's

passing due to COVID-19 and remarked: “I feel lucky to still be alive!” She took the time to remind me and my wife, Tesa, to wear face masks at all times when going out and to change shoes when re-entering the house. On April 13, she wished me “Happy Resurrection Day” and said that she had ten more chemotherapy sessions to go on. That same day, she briefly attended an online meeting of the AltDev program.

Tesa and I paid Maureen a neighborly and caring visit at her home for the last time on a hot and humid Sunday afternoon on June 28, 2020. During our visit, she was as voluble and animated as ever but could not maintain a long conversation. She condemned the Philippine health care system and her own experience with it, not because she was not getting well, but because of the profit-orientation and greed that seemed to rule above all healing concerns. After an hour, we bid her goodbye but (fearing the pandemic) did not give her a hug. On hindsight, perhaps we should have given her that final warm and tight embrace.



Our last photo with Maureen taken on December 21, 2019. Also in the photo is her husband, Jun Bandayrel Jr., associate editor of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the country's leading daily newspaper.

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