

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Between Structures and Lived Realities*

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The articles included in *Volume 6, Issue 2* of the *SUKISOK Journal of the Arts and Sciences* deal with different disciplines, contexts, and methodological traditions. However, despite these differences, they are connected by a common concern, i.e., the manner by which individuals and communities respond to, participate in, and are shaped by the structures within which they exist.

The issue begins with the article of **Jenan S. Naz**, **"Weak Parties, Strong Personalities: Persistence of Personalized Power in the Philippines."** The paper examines the persistence of personality politics in the Philippines through the interaction of populism, mediatization, clientelism, and weak party institutionalization. Rather than treating these as separate explanations, the article presents them as interconnected mechanisms that sustain personalized political power. In this manner, the study provides a framework for understanding why political authority in the Philippines continues to be strongly attached to personalities despite the existence of democratic institutions and electoral competition.

The discussion of political structures continues in the article of **Mark Joseph Santos**, **"The Maphilindian Regionalism as an Alternative to United States-China Dichotomy" / "Ang Rehiyunalismong Maphilindo bilang Alternatibo sa Dikotomiyang Estados Unidos-Tsina."** The paper questions the assumption that Philippine foreign policy must necessarily operate within a choice between alignment with the United States and alignment with China. As an alternative, it revisits the idea of Maphilindian or Pan-Malayan regionalism and argues for locating the Philippines within its broader cultural and regional affinities. Given this, the paper does not simply critique an existing foreign-policy dichotomy. It also attempts to open another way of thinking about Philippine regional identity and political relations.

From political and regional structures, the issue moves toward the lived experience of community. In **"Being-With the Church: A Heideggerian Analysis of Youth Lived Experiences of Synodality in the Diocese of Ilagan,"** **Jayson Mark G. Colcol** examines how young people experience belonging, listening, participation, and accompaniment within the Church. Using Heideggerian phenomenology, particularly

concepts such as *Mitsein*, care, authenticity, and being-with, the study presents synodality not merely as an institutional process but as something that is experienced through concrete relationships. This means then that participation in the Church is not exhausted by formal membership. Rather, it is constituted through the manner by which young people are seen, heard, accompanied, and allowed to participate meaningfully in ecclesial life.

The issue further broadens its geographical and disciplinary scope through **Victor George's "Collective Action for Market Access and Productivity in Agriculture: The Case of Rice Farmers in Tanzania."** The study examines producer organizations among rice farmers and considers how infrastructure, leadership, collective engagement, storage, access to credit, and institutional trust are related to agricultural productivity and market participation. Through its mixed-methods approach, the article also demonstrates that collective action is not merely a question of organizing farmers into groups. Its sustainability depends on the quality of the institutions, relationships, and material conditions that make cooperation possible.

The issue closes with **Jin Xiang and Minerva De Ala's "Examining Compassion Fatigue and Psychological Distress Among Medical Professionals: Evidence from a Cross-Sectional Study in a Provincial Hospital."** Situated within the context of healthcare professionals in China, the study examines compassion fatigue and psychological distress as consequences of emotionally demanding professional environments. It also considers how demographic characteristics may relate to these experiences. In this manner, the article shifts attention from broader political, social, and organizational structures toward the psychological experiences of individuals who work within demanding institutions of care.

Taken together, the articles in this issue demonstrate the interdisciplinary character that *SUKISOK* continues to cultivate. The discussions range from Philippine politics and foreign relations to philosophy, religion, agriculture, development, and healthcare. However, this diversity does not necessarily mean that the articles are disconnected from one another. On the contrary, each study examines—in one way or another—the relationship between persons and the structures surrounding them.

Political institutions shape how citizens understand leadership. Regional frameworks shape how nations understand their place in relation to others. Ecclesial communities shape how young people experience belonging. Producer organizations shape how farmers participate in collective economic life. Healthcare institutions shape the psychological experiences of those who provide care. Given this, the common concern of the issue lies not merely in institutions themselves but in how these institutions are lived, negotiated, sustained, challenged, and sometimes transformed by the people within them.

This is also what an interdisciplinary journal of the arts and sciences ought to make possible. It should not simply place different disciplines beside one another. Rather, it should provide a space where different forms of inquiry can contribute to a fuller understanding of human experience. It is in this sense that the diversity of the articles in this issue becomes one of its strengths.

We extend our gratitude to the authors who entrusted their work to the Journal and to the peer reviewers whose comments, criticisms, and recommendations contributed significantly to the development of the manuscripts. We likewise thank the members of the Editorial Team who worked throughout the review, revision, editing, and production processes involved in the completion of this issue.

We also thank the University and Campus administration, especially **Prof. Boyet L. Batang, PhD**, our University President, and **Prof. Marisol S. Foronda, PhD**, our Cluster Executive Officer, for their continued support of scholarly publication and research dissemination. Such support remains important in enabling *SUKISOK* to continue developing as a platform for academic exchange, interdisciplinary inquiry, and the wider dissemination of research.

Lastly, this issue also comes at a significant period of transition in the editorial leadership of the Journal. After serving as Managing Editor, I will formally assume the role of Chief Editor beginning with Volume 6, Issue 3. I look forward to taking on this responsibility with both gratitude and enthusiasm. In the same manner that the Journal has continued to develop through the collective work of its authors, reviewers, editors, and institutional partners, I hope to contribute to its further growth by strengthening its editorial practices, expanding its scholarly reach, and creating greater opportunities for meaningful research engagement within and beyond the Philippines.

The work ahead will certainly bring new challenges. However, it also brings new possibilities for the Journal. It is with this sense of continuity and possibility that I look forward to the next chapter of *SUKISOK*.