Spectres of New Media Technologies in the Public Sphere

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New media technologies are mechanisms of representation that reveal the relationship of technology and society. In the deconstructive politics of Jacques Derrida, the social and technological ontology of new media technologies produce spectres. Spectres introduce doubts and instability in dominant discourses and modes of representation in the public sphere; this becomes possible through iteration, which refers to the transformation of hegemonic authority through repetition of its fundamental terms of identification.

The essay presents a critique of new media technologies in the context of the Philippines. It is inspired by the work of Derrida, in his deconstructive reading of Marx's spectres, and Jürgen Habermas, whose theory of the public sphere offered an implicit appraisal of spectres. This examination of spectres will answer the question: what are the political possibilities of new media technologies in the public sphere?

Keywords: *spectres, new media technologies, deconstruction, public sphere*

Introduction

"The future belongs to ghosts," Jacques Derrida's seemingly inscrutable line in the 1983 film, *Ghostdance*, articulated the techno-media dilemma in our midst: the ghosts' unfinished business disturbs the present, and presages its realization in the future (Derrida & Stiegler, 2002). When spectres become a metaphor for communication, the line supplies a paradox to the contingency of communication because spectres have to work through the conditions of absence and presence, the past and future, and the material and figural. The sense of spectres as spirits with a communicative purpose makes the ghosts relevant to the living present while their transfiguration in new media technologies prefigures a foretold future (Derrida, 1994). Communication is a condition of spectral possibilities, and one possibility is enacting a promise that presupposes repetition and the chance to re-present something that is absent.

In *Spectres of Marx* (Derrida, 1994), where he subjected Marxism to deconstruction, Derrida portrayed spectres as phenomena that exceeded

binary oppositions: visible-invisible and spirit-body. These values are embodied in media technologies that also enable these technologies to transcend their constitution and open themselves up, in unforeseeable ways, for determination and judgment. Derrida acknowledged that media are "complex, differential, conflictual, and overdetermined" (p. 66), adding that wherever these conditions are present, "they communicate and cooperate at every moment toward producing the greatest force with which to assure the hegemony or the imperialism in question" (p. 66).

Derrida named radio, television, telephone, and the Internet, which operated with heightened speed and density of transmission, as vehicles of democracy because they made it easy to overcome political controls (Derrida & Steiger, 2002). Democracy is loaded with conceptual uncertainty. However, if understood through deconstruction, it becomes a spectral affiliate because it is a product of historically contingent practices, which anticipate different forms of power and public reconfiguring each other in relation to its own interest. The same Derridian aporia is disclosed in present-day technologies, like social media, whose goals, values, and limits are contestable but, when engaged, the effects of their simulation and repetition could undermine the meanings of texts, images, and sound. Boundaries are breached by technologies that could re-map political trajectories in society. All these effects testify to the power of spectres in a media mediated space that is the public sphere.

This essay offers a way of thinking about the effects of new media technologies, in a constrained democracy. Constrained democracy describes a condition where the mechanisms of representation and accountability are limited, arbitrary and, in some cases, even contradictory. Representation embodies something absent or was rendered absent, while accountability is about the system of rule and redress that monitors the exercise of power on behalf of citizens (Prendergast, 2000; Webb, 2009). The Philippines exemplifies the constrained democracy, and it is for this reason that the role of new media technologies is important. New media technologies are mechanisms or interfaces of representation that promote justice by reconfiguring representation and exposing abuses of power.

In this essay, I will elucidate the concept of new media technologies, spectres, and their democratic possibilities in the public sphere. The first part will discuss new media technologies while the second part will examine spectres as effects of new media technologies. The third part will look at how spectres provide the chance for change in the public sphere. The thread of the argument runs this way: the public sphere is the matrix of representations for images, sound, or text that have the effects of spectres

because they could undermine meanings, bring back the past, and supply possibilities that have political consequences for society.

Emergence of Spectres

In *Spectres of Marx* (1994), Jacques Derrida assigned to "teletechnologies" the capacity to construct virtualities, which name other modes for representing reality. Teletechnologies are media technologies that allow citizens to speak and lay claim to justice (Derrida & Stiegler, 2002). Derrida's use of the term, teletechnologies, anticipates the concept "new media technologies," which expands the former to account for their renewability in history, heightened conditions of exchanges and ubiquity in the present times. New media technologies provide new ways of overcoming space and time, as well as storing and retrieving memory so that the process of representation becomes illimitable. Their effects manifest heightened modification and multiplication of representation, or its possibility of being repeated infinitely (Derrida & Stiegler, 2002). The effects of new media technologies are called spectres (Beardsworth, 1996).

Spectres cannot be reduced to either human or technical intervention; they express the relation of humans to technology, also called the process of technicization. The latter refers to a process of embodiment or mediation in the production of meaning, where meaning is constitutive of societal collective memory (Beardsworth, 1996; Stiegler, 1998). In short, it is the process of becoming technological. With spectres, new media technologies allow representation to realize its possibilities. Freedom becomes possible when spectres disrupt texts, technology, tendencies, and thinking in order to reconfigure dominant frames and practices. The political force of spectres resides in the manner they disturb ideologies and structures of power, as well as in seeing a possibility within the unchangeable.

New media technologies enable the constitution of a public sphere with emancipatory potentials. Jürgen Habermas (1989; 1996) theorized the public sphere as spaces and events that are open to all. He characterized the public sphere as an arena where public opinion is formed, where citizens have access to and could confer with each other about matters of common interest, and where citizens could monitor the exercise of power and governance. In the public sphere, where democratic participation is rehearsed, new media technologies have the capacity to articulate the persistent demand for justice under conditions of inequality. The public sphere invites spectres due to its existent economic and social exclusions and rule-bound interaction that tend to be ideological and particularistic. There is always a chance that interaction in the public sphere could have "irrational impulses" and even become counterpublic (Negt & Kluge, 1992;

Thomassen, 2006). Habermas has acknowledged exclusions in the public sphere (Habermas, 1996) but he has neglected to theorise the modes of resistance that enable inclusions (Calhoun, 1992; Negt & Kluge, 1972). Thus while the public sphere guarantees access and participation, there is a chance that dominant groups in society advance, not the public's interest, but their own. By reifying the notion of the public sphere, Habermas invites spectres to inhabit it.

Spectres can be mapped in the Philippines, which provides historical specificity to the growth of technologies of representation. The historical development could be understood via the uneven growth of capitalism. Karl Marx's *Capital* (1976) traces the development of capitalism and its transformation of existing modes of production. Marx described the dispossessed peasants who eventually become a mass of exploited workers in the course of creating markets for varying forms of commodity production. This growth is integrated with colonialism, responsible for the formation of a class of rulers and the linking of the domestic economy to the global market (Marx, 1976). Marx designated this historical process as "primitive" accumulation, which is characterized by brutality and immiseration.

While Marx confined his analysis to the early days of capitalism, Marxist geographer David Harvey (2010) argued that the dissection is necessary to examine the growth of a mode of production in relation to global capital. Instead of primitive accumulation, Harvey preferred the term "accumulation by dispossession" (2010, p. 310) to highlight capitalism's ongoing predatory practices that exploit people, resources, and environments across the globe to extract profit.

Forms of dispossession have created variations in commodification, develop forces of production, and, the same time, ignited "protean forms of class war" (San Juan, 1999, p. 200) that reconfigure physical and political landscapes. These social conditions explain the presence of a stratified and non-participatory public sphere, to the extent that dominant groups preside over the mobilization of people and the formation of speech and public opinion.

My examination of new media technologies informs an approach to understanding them. New media technologies should be understood as embodying a particular expression of power and subjectivities, not merely for their ubiquity and instrumentality, as exemplified in the Philippine setting whenever their role in political transformation is mentioned. New media technologies have played a role in major political shifts in the country in the last three decades or so by giving voice to oppositional forces and those unheard, and by taking a stand on issues. New media technologies have always fulfilled this function. They were always present when civilian

oppositional groups intervene in politics: when a dictator was ousted in 1986; and a popular president, indicted of plunder, was unseated in 2001.

Today, a chance for political intervention lies in the widespread access to new media technologies. The Philippines has 37 million Internet users and an Internet penetration rate of 36% (International Telecommunications Union, 2014). While Internet access per capita is low, the country has the "fastest growing Internet population in the world," at 531% (AsiaDigital Factbook, 2014, p. 19). How these possibilities of new media technologies anticipate intervention and agencies would be considered in the following discussion.

New Media Technologies

In interrogating the term "new media technologies," it will be useful to remember that the categories comprising the term exceed their determinations of being new, intervening, and historical.

Novelty appears to be the top criteria; everything is problematized or resolved under the advantage of being new. For example, the convenient use of the terms "new media" and "old media," juxtaposes the analogue format with its digital counterpart. This designation is inaccurate because it is their materially constituted format that becomes the basis for their distinction when, in fact, both formats presuppose each other. The term "new media" often embodies newness applied to digital or internet-based applications, while the phrase "technologies" conveys materiality as machines and devices.

However, Lisa Gitelman (2006) noted that appending "new" to media to denote digitization would erase their history and representational function. The phrase new media is deceiving because, for Gitelman, media is not entirely new. Thus, she suggests that the phrase should not signify periodization but how new media became part of society "for ongoing negotiation of meaning as such" (p. 6). On the other hand, Carolyn Marvin (1988) used the term new media to describe media challenging preceding media or technologies in terms of the changes that they bring. Marvin's examination of new media technologies does not privilege their "technical efficiencies" but how they figured in social process, including the negotiation with "power, authority, representation and knowledge" (p. 5).

Common to both Gitelman and Marvin's accounts is the idea that the phrase new media is crucially shaped by both continuity and change. These two features—not novelty and interactivity—define new media technologies. After all, interactivity is also present in analogue technology. In their care not to impose a totalizing concept on new media technologies, Gitelman and Marvin's arguments invite an imaginary that is quite similar

to Derrida's. For Derrida (1997), a medium is shaped by the "other" that it excludes, hence there can be no conceptual purity or a break between "old" or "new" media. "Iterability" dissolves the difference between the terms. Iterability refers to the condition of possibility, of being new despite new media technologies' place in history.

In Derridean sense, iterability brings the possibility of "repetition that necessarily contains the possibility of difference and the possibility of sameness…" (Stocker, 2006, p. 170). Iterability links repetition to presence, or the chance to be renewed and recognized. The element of newness becomes a condition of possibility of media; it is presupposed in its conceptual construction in relation to history. Thus, while contested, newness connotes renewability, which means that the newness does not refer to the media's technical and automated constitution but the sense of being repeated and recognized as spaces for engagement, where every repetition creates something new that is the same. Benjamin Peters (2009) offered a similar argument on new media's capacity to be renewed and combined in history while Bernard Stiegler's (1998) idea of technology is one that embodies a specific innovation but draws from antecedent technologies, and this constitution opens up "possibilities for infinite variations" (p. 238).

Media are structures and processes of communication that preside over people, groups, and their interaction, to produce and circulate representations (Gitelman, 2006,). This definition points to the wider processes with social and cultural significance along with the challenges that they deal with when representation, or content, is distributed and consumed.

Media cannot be a product of just one epoch; while they embody specific innovations, they also draw from the precedent technologies. Acknowledging the antecedent technologies aligns the term with the notion of iterability, a useful arrangement when thinking about newspaper, radio, television, and telecommunications that undergo changes described by Lev Manovich (2001) as novel, dynamic and innovative. Thus, no longer would the new media not equated only with novelty because of the fluidity of its history and the function that exceeds its designation.

The next term that requires elucidation is "technologies" which is generally defined as a set of artefacts and practices produced by humans. It is irreducibly plural. Technologies are emblems of modernity; their production is a result of the accretive development in science and capital that both shared the logic of rationalization and objectification (Heidegger, 1977; Marx, 1976). Technologies express the relationship of humans to society. Andrew Feenberg (1999) sums up this relationship as "all the major determinations exhibited in the various stages of (technologies') development" (p. 179), including the various possibilities that they embraced.

Drawing from preceding arguments, the term new media technologies designates a composite term to express the social and technological aporias of "new," "media," and "technologies," in relation to their place in history, their technical constitution, representational role, and political possibilities. The newness indicates renewability in history. New media technologies attend to the relations with the "other." Writing, for example, is presupposed in communication where presence or absence of an "other" designates the exchange as "telepresence," overcoming space and time. Moreover, technologically mediated relationships increase contact and exchange of ideas that are characteristic of modern society. Finally, new media technologies interaction configures social relations and ideologies because of the fluidity that they engender.

As mechanisms of representation, new media technologies embody something that may be present or could be available in a given time. Communication technologies convey the absence of a tangible presence. This introduces justice to end the neglect, disavowal, and repression of the other. Conveying presence despite a physical absence promotes engagement even in conditions of impossibility. This intervention allows possibilities to emerge without the physical presence, as in writing in the form of letters, books, and posts over the Internet and social media applications. New media technologies thus represent heterogeneous and emancipative forms of social relations.

Theodor Adorno (2003) introduced a crucial issue in representation via his schema of domination, "identity thinking" or "negative dialectic." The dialectic designates likeness, congruence, and reversibility between paired concepts, or between the subject and the object (Rose, 1978). For Adorno (2003), identity thinking homogenizes, and, analogous to the movement of commodity in the market that thrives on exchange value, this conceptual dilution subsumes everyone in false universality. For representation or mediating technologies, derived meanings can never be self-evident or sufficient to stand in or render presence. In Adorno's work (1991) on the culture industry, cultural production followed standardization, commodification, and massification in print, broadcast, cinema and advertising. The logic of technology testifies to the rationalization of the culture industry, where rationalization means the formation of representational codes. For example, advertising inscribes and appropriates information to conform to the dominant ideology in order to justify profit (Adorno, 1991). Similarly, the work of Stuart Hall (1990) noted that ideological codes work through practices, texts, and structures of media representation as dominant vehicles. Hall's paradigm of "Encoding/Decoding" demonstrates the possibility of undermining ideologies in representation through the

process of interpretation. The reliance of representation on attendant social relations and contexts from which the codes emerge informs the presence of asymmetries in a media text.

Representation anticipates the examination of representation codes, especially when equivalence has been reached, and to the extent that their agenda seemed natural. However, Fredric Jameson (2009) argues that Adorno's identity thinking, which represents reality as equivalent to a representation, is conceptually untrustworthy. This could lead, for instance, to seeing an image in media as something that is real because of a premature synthesis. This equivalence also means imposed unity or totality, which ends when representation is repeated and meaning is reconstituted.

What is then the consequence of undermining what is believed to be a stable representation? Rather than equivalence, the relationship of new media technologies and society is one of constitutive solicitation. The technologies manifest empirical presence and transcendence simultaneously. In other words, technologies overcome time and space to have real presence. For example, newspapers and the Internet allow simultaneous access from all over the globe. This level of engagement could either extend or detach meanings from their spatio-temporal context, thus enabling their modification, alteration, and repetition. Jacques Derrida (1993) calls the tension generated from this relationship "aporia", which describes a condition where meaning is doubted and experience undergoes unstable repetition. This situation invites transgression of boundaries and limits. An aporia in new media technologies at once limits and undermines a determination of meanings, thus precipitating political judgment.

New media technologies have an uneven growth in the Philippines. The spread of technologies in the Philippines—related to the growth in infrastructure, including roads, telecommunications, aviation, and shipping—reveals the uneven growth of capitalism. In terms of the global percentage of individuals using the Internet in 2013, the country ranked 106th, with 37 percent which is slightly below the world average of 37.9 percent (The State of Broadband," 2014). Other Internet access studies focused on commerce, treating Internet users as consumers (International Telecommunication Union and UNESCO, 2014), and on youth behavior, including risky behavior in personal relationships established online ("Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study," 2014). These studies have less to do with the notion that Internet access could lead to realization of a range of human rights, including the right to know and free expression (United Nations, 2011), but more about market reach and morality. It is plausible that the vitality of Internet expansion and the lifestyle of the youth would both be regulated by the logic of surplus value and the conservatism

respectively. Thus, an analysis of new media technologies is limited without the examination of the ideology and commodification that shaped representation and its context. In all, privileging access produces a simplistic picture of the role of new media technologies in society.

Keeping the concept of new media technologies open to aporia prevents its reification through technological determinism, which either overestimates the role of technology or underestimates it. What underlies technological determinism, with its variations, is the causality of the relationship of technology and society (Fuchs, 2014). It assumes that technologies of representation have a specific effect on society. Hence it discounts other forces and relations as equally important. This thinking favors embracing new media technologies without examining domination, ideology, and the commodification that technology inaugurates, and the political challenges these conditions bring to a particular society. For example, Facebook, integrated into established mass media, in 2013, was praised for its role in mobilizing marchers against corruption traced to high offices of the Philippine government. Media reports and analyses of the so-called "Million March" tended toward a reification of the technology-society relationship by highlighting, not the protest against corruption, but the messianic power of the social media platform.

In his critique of technological determinism, Vincent Mosco (2004) raised the reified concept of technological determinism to the level of myth by calling it a "captivating fiction, a promise unfulfilled and perhaps unfulfillable" (p. 22). To explain the myth behind the reified concept, Mosco refers to technological determinism as a feeling that "briefly overwhelms reason" (p. 22). This formulation reveals the nature of political participation within a constrained democracy.

The relationship between technology and society in the Philippines manifested several aporias. The first one is participating in a constrained and elite-dominated public sphere. The second one is dealing with exclusions that deprive many of economic growth and freedom. The third aporia is the global exploitation of labour brought by the capitalist global markets.

Bernard Stiegler argued that speed of technological growth in relation to the development of culture is uneven; thus there could be ambivalence, breakdowns, and suspension of decisions leading to instability and disruption of control. This displacement reconfigures social relations and meanings. Unlike Derrida, who suspends judgment upon an aporia, Stiegler sets it against technology altering societal relation to space and time or, simply put, the technological effects on a particular society that has existing social relations, interests, political structures, ideologies, and struggles, that are all potentially contradictory (Beardsworth, 2007; Derrida & Stiegler,

2002). Unlike Derrida, who detached technology from a political decision, Stiegler (2009) looks at the new media technologies as enablers of political reflection and action. Due to this connection, political judgments have the potential to undermine the ideologies of techno-scientific progress.

Political Possibilities of Spectres

Spectres are effects of new media technologies, and the following discussion will sketch their possibilities. To understand spectres, one considers how the spatial and the temporal realms are reorganized by new media technologies. Spectres enhance the techniques of power and practices of knowledge and expressions. In the age of the Internet and digitalization, spectres operate through technical and semiotic regimes where repetition and differentiation are possible.

Derrida's spectres came from his deconstructive reading of Marx's spectres in *Capital*. Marx's fascination with ghosts and ghouls, which stalked his arguments and was taken up by Derrida to acknowledge their continued presence in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, speedy advance of globalizing capitalism, and the proliferation of new media technologies. According to Fredric Jameson (2009), Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* was a provocation, a serious enterprise amid the putative triumph of the neoliberal ideology (Jameson, 2009).

Spectres are not synonymous with ghosts; rather, they function like metaphors in a deconstructive logic of presence-absence and life-death. They facilitate the process of textual intervention (Jameson, 2009; Davis, 2007). With Derrida (1994), spectre becomes a "thing" with a dual constitution—visible and invisible, absent and present, a spirit and having a body—the two terms that anticipate each other or are co-originary. Analogous to how Marx sees money as a universal symbol of value on a piece of paper, Derrida's designation of spectre as "thing" is his attempts at postmodern theorising instead of dwelling on the impossibility of the subject.

Spectres are traces or remainders of a past. New media technologies appear as instruments of labour to remind us that spectres can be traced back to the accretive technology and production processes in history. Spectres haunt, and the logic of haunting is repetition, a reiteration with limitless effects and has the ability to modify reality. An example from social media is the Twitter hashtag about a concurrent event, retweeted several times and modified in the course of its transmission.

Derrida assumed materiality in spectres. Spectres are signs that include images, sounds, and objects transmuted into media forms for transmission, modification, and commodification. Media formats transform representations into flexible signs and make possible a connection among

interpreters and their groups (Manovich, 2001). These possibilities have less to do with the content of a sign or its material constitution; rather, it is more about providing a space for something to appear or return. This orientation of spectres resists hegemonic structures and transforms social relations.

Spectres emerged from the development of science and technology harnessed toward accumulation and appropriation of surplus value, including attendant social relations. This relationship is governed by money-form as a result of privileging exchange value over use value. Exchange among people and groups is a basic form of interaction but, in Marx's exposition in *Capital,* exchange value is an abstract form of social relations in which things are available for universal exchange (Marx, 1976)). The exchange is premised, not on production of needs, but on appropriation of another's product. This relationship affects the semiotic fields (Voloshinov, 1973). Since spectres cannot be separated from the growth in capitalist production, it follows that the motives for profit accumulation and narrow interests are present. However, forms of representation of the marginalized and exploited are also presupposed.

Spectres, as effects of new media technologies, have the capacity to destabilize culture and politics. They manifest, simulate, transmit, and repeat images, sounds, texts, which may appear altered. They could also amplify, modify , and overcome limits of space and time. Repetition allows individuals to recognize dissonance and control that frame a representation. Repetition allows variance and multiplication, both of which are characteristic of technical simulation of new media technologies (Manovich, 2001). In terms of spectral metaphor, iteration defies effacement, much like a ghost returns to haunt the present.

Spectres were part of Derrida's deconstructive politics whose principles of deconstruction were laid down by Gayatri Spivak's preface in *Of Grammatology*. Deconstruction is a critique of the metaphysics of presence in the self-evident ground of identity, presence, and history (Spivak, 1997). The use of binaries to convey reality is problematic by positing the first term as prior and superior the second term. Moreover, the second term is considered a threat to what the first term represents. For Derrida, binaries efface and repress the "other." Deconstruction exposes the binary as a relation of domination and conveys an absence and marginality to question artificial hierarchy and identity. The concepts present the possibility of inflected meanings that multiply in the process of serial articulation.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida (1994) brings deconstruction to bear on technologies of representation. Technologies constitute what Derrida calls the "new speed of apparition" of the "simulacrum, the synthetic or prosthetic image and the virtual event, cyberspace and surveillance, the

control, appropriations" (p. 67), that reconfigure the social. The spectrality of these effects, articulates a promise that requires judgment. Thus, while technologies are recognized for their universalizing and homogenizing logic, they also supply conditions of emancipation whenever they intervene in reality or techno-virtuality.

The effects enabled by new media technologies could be seen in two ways: first, on the technological appearance or simulation, and second, on reception, or the technologies impact upon society. On the first, new media technologies play a part in the development of images destined for reproduction. For example, from a hand-drawn image to its digital composition, the changes afford many ways of simulating reality. On the second, the effects of new media technologies reconstruct meanings that offer another way of looking at reality.

The possibilities are within the contexts of antinomies of democracy that demand justice: inequality, exclusion, and displacement. The struggle for justice could be worked through spectres. While Derrida's reformulation of Marx's spectres did not prescribe modes of emancipation, he offered deconstruction to tease out possibilities. Aijaz Ahmad (1999) termed it "a gesture of affiliation" (p. 89 and "deconstructive solidarity" (p. 108). Derrida's (1992) deconstruction foreshadows the future by paying attention to the inconsequential, the irrational and the "other" ignored by dominant discourses.

Spectres in the Public Sphere

The earlier argument offered described the public sphere as a matrix of spectres. Given the workings of spectres, what needs to be discussed is how might spectres, which are effects of new media technologies, function in the public sphere?

The public sphere is a democratic ideal that figured in discussions of nation, democracy, and new media technologies. It is considered a space in which those who are marginalized and oppressed can speak and represent themselves. In the public sphere, people discuss issues and hold government in check (Habermas, 1989). Predicated by the ideas of Enlightenment, including the public use of reason, the public sphere allows claims to be made with competence, sincerity and a desire toward rational consensus (Habermas, 1989). Habermas feared that if language is ambiguous and ambivalent, misunderstanding may lead to resentment and disengagement. His regard for technology in the public sphere has been generally instrumental: Habermas grants it with some kind of neutrality because, after all, the space facilitates intersubjective understanding and monitors power and market. However, the test of publicness in the public

sphere is not in the public presence as Habermas noted. Rather, it is about attending to the needs of those who exist but are ignored or not allowed to speak of their oppression.

Habermas' critics pointed out that the public sphere can no longer be understood as homogenizing space because representation is plural, contested, and contestable as a result of the emergence of different publics (Klug & Negt, 1993; Warner, 2002). These publics include those who are without power to represent themselves or have no access to modes of deliberation. Often, these publics are subsumed under a general label, like "voters," "masses," and "public," to convey a sense of their malleability and consent to hegemony. This does not discount the use of force. A public sphere, in this case, may exhibit degrees of cynicism and disengagement. Given such constraints, the formation of public opinion, which public sphere is oriented to, may not reflect the plurality of sentiments (Habermas, 1996). Derrida (1992)indirectly addressed issues on the public sphere by examining the formation of public opinion in *The Other Heading*. Derrida called public opinion a "silhouette of phantom" (p. 84), that speaks for someone and for itself. For Derrida (1992), not only does opinion need to refer to other opinion, it must also exceed its limits and claims and simply to open itself to the "other."

When he sketched the classic bourgeois public sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1989) explained the ideals and limits of social relations based on class and logic of surplus value production. In the tradition of immanent critique, Habermas argued for the existence of a democratic public sphere in which citizens have the capacity and resources to discuss and work together for a common interest. Now the issue to be resolved is to determine if Habermas' public sphere is present in the Philippines and to describe its characteristics.

I argue that the public sphere in the Philippines is as conflictive as the constrained democracy in the country. While fundamental laws guarantee that citizens have access to economic, political, and cultural participation, this is far from realized due to class issues: property, ownership of the means of production, gender, ethnicity, and other forms of social inequality. The country's 350 years of colonial experience not only undermined free expressions and the process of enlightenment, but also installed an elite-dominated government and public sphere. The ruling elites—a mixture of landed families, comprador capitalists and their associates—predominated over the public sphere that was subordinated to the political structures they established. Probably the biggest attack on the public sphere was the imposition of martial rule in 1972 by President Ferdinand Marcos. The Marcos dictatorship arrested media practitioners, closed the mass media

outlets, and censored what media remained. When Marcos was overthrown, his successors introduced liberal reforms unable to eliminate economic inequality or provide full access to avenues for participation in the public sphere.

The Philippine public sphere produced spectres. In colonial times, new media technologies were deployed in the anti-colonial struggles against Spain and the United States (Ofreneo, 1986). The "mosquito press," the pseudonym of alternative or anti-Marcos press, was established to provide oppositional views (Nieva, 1985). However: the mosquito press fulfilled an even bigger role by prefiguring a public sphere under repressive conditions. The same function was provided by the underground or revolutionary publications supporting various revolutionary movements. The tradition of the mosquito press, so named because of its seemingly small but accretive damage, remains in the form of news websites, blogs, memes, social media interactions against hegemonic discourses.

Given the history of counterpublics and oppositional public sphere in the Philippines, new media technologies are haunted by spectres of those political spaces. New media technologies expand the discursive space in which public opinion is formed, and allow the articulation of voices that are excluded from rule-guaranteed representations. As publicness is a feature of new media technologies, they have the capacity respond to diverse publics and the unrepresented. Representation is the process of repetition of presence, where repetition is not resemblance but multiplication and alteration of presence and meanings. For Derrida (2007), representation suggests a return or restoration of an absence in diverse modes of forms—trace, sign, or symbol.

The rise of new media technologies—also known as social media and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so forth—sparked debates about applications producing public sphere or themselves becoming public spheres. Christian Fuchs's (2014) study on Twitter as public sphere noted that Twitter's political economy follows the logic of commodity, which is no different from other social networking sites where advertising and entertainment likely shape the selection of tweets and trends.

In social media, one can easily boost presence by paying. On Twitter, this stratified characteristic exemplifies Habermas' (1989) narrative of the transformation of the public sphere when power and money penetrated the sphere of free discussion. Habermas noted that when the laws of the market pervade, "rational-critical debate . . . (is) replaced by consumption, and the web of public communication unravelled into acts of individuated consumption . . ." (p. 161). Fuchs (2014) concluded that Twitter is not a

public sphere because of its political economic make up. By extension, this is true for other social media platforms as well.

The presence of spectres in the public sphere highlights the emancipatory potential of new media technologies despite a commodified and stratified public sphere. However, within the public sphere, it is impossible to form a consensus or for representation to become unitary and fixed because representation is underpinned by variance. Thus, there is always a possibility that dominant representations in the public sphere could be undermined when hegemonic discourses turn against themselves.

The public sphere produces spectres by demanding justice. In *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Bruce Robbins (1993) argued that spectres in the public sphere expand the spaces for deliberation and representation in the process of responding to diversity of identity politics. Identity politics could undermine existing politics and deliberation rules. This could mean that the public sphere is subject to disruptions and aporia in the process of recognizing more representation. This is how spectres transform the public sphere. What this spectral evaluation of the public sphere reveals is how the public realm thrives on inequality, while equality supervenes upon its interactions and discourses. Thus, rather than pursuing the goal of consensus, the public sphere acknowledges its hospitality to spectres.

Conclusion

This essay argued how the process of representation staged by new media technologies transforms the public sphere. New media technologies are more than technical means to realize representation, they also constitute the ideology of representation. Given the capacity of new media technologies to reproduce counter-representations of subalterns, the public sphere is transformed to become a space for the "other" (Derrida, 1994). What is underscored here is the spectral contingency in new media technologies through technicization, the process by which meanings, interpretations, and actions evolve (Stiegler, 2011). Spectres produced in new media technologies bypass prohibitions and exceed boundaries, making them, in Bernard Stiegler's words, the "launching pad for access to new possibles" (p. 203).

We can now imagine a democracy, through spectres. If the public sphere is the matrix of representations made available as images, sound, or text, then spectres undermine meanings, bring back the past, invoke promises, and shape politics.

Thus, the presence of spectres, not only introduced dissent in the public sphere, it also enlarged its discursive space to allow the other to emerge. They also articulate the enduring demand for justice, which in turn reflects

the tension of the uneven growth of capitalism. Most importantly, spectres allow the construction of solidarities towards change.

Spectres create a framework for understanding the relationship of new media technologies to society in the context of constrained democracy. They also reveal the workings of deconstruction, which articulate diversity and justice against discourses and structures maintained by the hegemony of capital. Thus, while new media technologies are shaped by the logic of commodity and surplus value maximization, they also have potentials beyond capitalism. The effects of new media technologies on the process of representation—including simulation, repetition, differentiation, and disavowal—are spectres providing innumerable resources for political intervention. In other words, spectres are the hope of democracy and phantoms that rekindle political struggles.

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