

OPEN INVITATION
ASIAN CONFERENCE ON PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND
ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF POPULAR POWER
In Metro Manila, Philippines, January 2007

Organized by *Laban ng Masa* and *Transform Asia*, Philippines,
and the *Left International Forum*, Sweden.

Sponsored by Focus on the Global South, Philippines.

At a time when neoliberal globalization ravages the world, when the system cannot deliver even the most fundamental prerequisites for dignified life, resistance based on popular participation to create a better world for humanity, is inevitable. Movements arise at local and national levels to protect the interests of the peoples, to work for social change and to seek ways of transforming the structures that maintain and uphold brutal social and economic injustices. New forms of organizations based on democratic structures that enable popular participation emerge to retake power over the decision making affecting our lives and communities.

Our conference aims to connect various experiences and to exchange knowledge about the theories and practices of the different forms of participatory democracy and alternative forms of popular power that have emerged in Asia and other regions. We aim to bring together political leaders, mass leaders, community and social movement activists and intellectuals from different countries to a dialogue - to discuss and exchange experiences and ideas.

Special focus will be given to the unique developments in the Philippines. In the Philippines the strength of the peoples organizations and their impact in the community at the *barangay* (local council) and municipal level, is not only that of being able to survive very hard and even dictatorial political conditions, but to subsequently defend and advance an alternative peoples democratic agenda on all fronts: political, economic, social and cultural. The conference will reflect on and draw out the lessons of that experience which cross-cuts community participation as well as self-organizing across sectors on a national level, i.e. labor, peasants, fishers, urban poor, women, youth, the *Bangsa Moro* peoples struggles, indigenous struggles, gay-lesbian and transgender and sexual rights, and others. At the national level we also have the experience of mass upsurge which have been key to breaking elite rule in particular periods, which include the peoples strike movements (or *welgang bayan*). In addition to this, we also have the electoral experience of proportional representation of marginalized groups participating in the electoral arena. All this sums up to the experience of peoples participation using every possible avenue and arena to defend and expand the democratic space, the development of an alternative peoples economic, political, social and cultural agenda, as well as now developing alternative forms of popular governance.

This conference is a continuation of an International Conference on Participatory Democracy held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2004 and a Latin American Conference on Participatory Democracy held in Caracas, Venezuela, in 2005. Documentation from these conferences are available at our website, www.participamos.org.

This appeal constitutes an open invitation to interested organizations and individuals to take part in the conference. By October 2006 a conference program will be available for distribution on our website. If you are interested in participating in the conference or are interested in knowing more about the process, please don't hesitate to contact us.



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