

Healthy Environment and Democratic Governance as Pathways to Peace: An Experience from a Rural Fishing Village in the Philippines

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Abstract: *This study explores into the concepts of democracy and environment in relation to the notions of peace of the fishermen of the coastal fishing community of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte. This study is qualitative in nature and specifically employed the method of ethnography and interpretative analysis. By delving into the experiences of the fishermen themselves, this researcher would try to determine the fishermen's notion of peace in relation to their lives as intertwined with the behavior of the sea, examine the essence of democracy that lead to the realm of environment conservation and investigate into the effects of environment conservation as a result of the working of the democratic principles in the lives of the fishermen. This study has found out that for the fishermen of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte, peace is understood in relation to the concept of pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan (human person's support and care for mother nature) and pagbulig sa panahon (the natural environment's favorable behavior towards the human person). These two concepts relate to the concept of democracy since they have semblances in relation to the concepts of citizen empowerment, peaceful life, and mutual help. This paper then concludes that peace can only be achieved if fishermen live in harmony with nature and that attaining peace is more enhanced if people striving for it live in a democratic society. Furthermore, this study also concludes that the notion of citizen empowerment is a significant factor in the fishermen's attainment of peace. Lastly, this study concludes that the notions of mutual help and the quest for a peaceful life made it possible for the fishermen to arrive at a sense of peace.*

Keywords: *Fishing community, environmental protection and peaceful life.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of democracy is not new to humankind. In fact, the early Greek thinkers have defined the concept in a variety of ways. Aristotle for instance, has construed democracy as not really the best form of government. However, he has acknowledged that in a democracy, rule is by and for the needy whose government would be run by people who would also pursue virtue (Gill, 2014). By virtue, Aristotle refers to moral virtue which is

construed as the only practical road to effective action. A virtuous person sees truly and judges rightly, since beautiful things appear as they truly are only to a person of good character. It is only in the middle ground between habits of acting and principles of action that the soul can allow right desire and right reason to make their appearance, as the direct and natural response of a free human being to the sight of the beautiful (Sachs, 2006).

Yet Plato, the teacher of Aristotle, has asserted that it may be impossible to impart political wisdom to everyone, but everyone, no matter what his trade or poverty level, can participate equally in a democracy (Gill, 2014). For Plato, the essential nature of democracy is freedom, particularly, the freedom of speech and the right to live as one likes. Everyone can arrange his private life as he pleases. Hence, Plato's notion of democracy is characterized by contempt for the principles of noble nature and good education. As mentioned earlier, Plato has stressed that regardless of qualifications, anyone can meddle in politics. It then suffices that when one declares his loyalty to the people, equality is bestowed on equals and non-equals alike (Hansen, 2009). However, one interesting thing about these concepts of democracy is that of Isocrates, an Athenian orator and rhetorician, who has observed that democratic societies also tolerate evil since such societies have already enjoyed so much freedom (Gill, 2016). As Isocrates aptly puts: "democracy destroys itself because it abuses its right to freedom and equality by teaching its citizens to consider audacity as a right, lawlessness as freedom, abrasive speech as equality, and anarchy as progress" (Lewis, 2012).

In recent history, the Philippines has been recorded as the first democratic republic in Asia. According to a Social Weather Station survey conducted in September - October 2000, Filipinos construe democracy as political freedom, civil liberty, human rights, political participation, citizen empowerment, equality before the law, elections and popular vote, and the majority rule. Together, these aspects of democracy were the most salient and ready association that Filipinos expressed in their answers. Not only that, Filipinos also understand democracy to mean national unity, solidarity, mutual help, a peaceful life, national progress, a better country, patriotism, love, and truth (Abueva, Guerrero, 2003). With the two types of definitions Filipinos ascribe to democracy, the first manifests a more academic understanding of the concept while the second expresses the hopes and aspirations for a kind of society and nation Filipinos want. This is here that this paper will explore on how the concept of democracy in the present Philippine society is very much related to the realm of environment conservation as well as the notions of peace of the fishermen of the fishing coastal community of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario in Baybay City, in the province of Leyte. By delving into the experiences of the fishermen themselves, this paper would try to uncover how the fishermen's notions of peace are related to the concept of democracy and the realm of environment conservation.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative, ethnographic, and narrative. It is ethnographic in the sense that it is designed to arrive at the notions of peace of fishermen of Baybay, Leyte. This research aligns with Creswell's (2007) understanding of ethnography in which the research partners' notions of peace are construed by delving into the meaning of behavior, language, and aspects of how they live, relate, and interact with each other in their respective communities (Creswell, 2007). In doing this research method, the researcher has immersed himself in the fishing community of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte.

In the conduct of the study, the researcher has engaged in participant observation by observing the fishermen's way of life, engage himself with the members of the community through unstructured conversations in the language that the fishermen are most comfortable with – the vernacular. After all, to be able to understand a people is to understand their way of life, their beliefs, and values as shown in their language and the way they live in society (Paz, ed.2008).

As a requirement of an ethnographic study, the researcher ought to gather information where the fishermen work and live. With this, the researcher engaged himself in a field work where he frequented the research site for a period of six months and in the process became familiar and made friends with his research partners/respondents. With this, the researcher was able to set up key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD) sessions in the respondents most preferred time and place. With this, the researcher made use of interview schedule and a journal to record significant data that had come out of the interviews and focus group discussion sessions. In order not to miss a thing in the process of the conversations, the researcher asked permission from the respondents to allow him to digitally record the interviews and FGDs. The FGDs were designed to arrive at three equally significant data. The first focussed into the baseline information on the research topic at hand, the second delved more on clarifying things that the researcher construed as vague and unclear during the first sessions of the FGD and the third zeroed in at the validation of what the researcher has come up during the FGD sessions. Yet, the researcher also used key informant interviews with the respondents to also clarify things on issues that certain respondents had raised during the FGD. The researcher also acquired permission from the respondents to use the data gathered in the FGDs and KII in relevant publications and paper presentations.

In the thrust to arrive at the fishermen's notions of peace, key questions have been asked during the FGDS and KIIs. The first question zeroes in on asking them of the local words that the fishermen use to mean peace in a variety of ways. Words that they use every day connoting peace in their context of being fishermen. With this, the researcher has come up with words that manifest their need to have a closer relationship with the sea and Mother Nature as well as a good inter-personal relationship among themselves. The second question focuses on words or phrases that give them an understanding of what peace is all about or the aspect that gives them a basic understanding of the essence of peace. The last question delves into the means or the strategies that the fishermen have employed to attain of peace in their lives. These refer to actions geared towards mutual help and collaboration so that they could peacefully co-exist with each other. Such question tackles on what are the things that they do as fishermen in order for them to arrive at peace in their lives. Such refers to their activities within the fishing community that they are living in.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Fishermen's Notion of Peace

For the fishermen of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte, their lives are intertwined and are very affected by the behaviour of the sea. For one, they live near the sea and they depend on the sea for their means of making a living. When it comes to their notions and understanding of peace, it is not difficult to construe that such notion is, in one way or another, influenced by the behaviour of the sea. With this, it is quite proper to say that the fishermen's notion of peace is best understood in relation to the fishermen's concept of

Kinabuhi sa Dagat (life in relation to the sea). *Kinabuhi sa dagat* refers to the fishermen's relationship with the sea as an extension of their lives. As mentioned earlier, fishermen's lives are primarily dependent on the conditions of the sea which is the source of their livelihood. From the sea they source out their food and thus their income. This is where they get funds for their children's tuition and other basic needs. Thus, if the sea is quiet, serene, tranquil, and calm, there is also a sense of tranquillity and serenity in fishermen's lives that manifest their possession of inner peace.

Yet, it is of utmost importance to take note that peace cannot be achieved without exerting human efforts for its attainment. For the fishermen, peace for them is not served on a silver platter. They have to do their share in the thrust to attain peace so that they can arrive at a sense of peace in their lives as individuals and as members of the society. For the fishermen, peace is only achieved if they do their part in support for the environment and the seas' well-being. In Baybayanon-Sinugbuanon, this is expressed in the words *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* (human beings' support and care for mother nature). These words refer to a variety of fishermen's efforts that would enable them to do something to preserve and conserve of what is left of the natural environment. Yet, in doing these things, the fishermen should have freedom of movement, freedom to make significant decisions, freedom to do what is best for nature conservation and freedom to do what is best for the natural environment. In not so many words, the fishermen need a variety of freedoms which can only be made possible in a free and democratic society. After all, in a democracy, people adhere to the rule of the majority where the premium of human freedom is given utmost significance.

With this given, the fishermen could empower themselves with the use of their freedom to do something for the natural environment's well-being. Hence, in a democracy, the protection and conservation of the natural environment's well-being can be easily facilitated because of a variety of freedoms that people enjoy. For the fishermen, they could freely undertake activities that adhere to the worlds "*pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan*" (human beings' support and care for Mother Nature). This is the aspect that manifests fishermen's thrust to care for the natural environment so that the natural environment would also return the favour to the fishermen for their venerable acts of protecting Mother Nature. In Baybayanon-Sinugbuanon words, this is the aspect of "*pagbulig sa panahon*" (the natural environment's favourable behaviour towards the fishermen). This aspect is important since the fishermen believe that their relationship with the natural environment is reciprocal in essence. For them, there can never be "*pagbulig sa panahon*" (the natural environment's favourable behaviour towards the fishermen) if there is no *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* (human beings' support and care for mother nature).

Hence, for the fishermen, peace is achieved because of the reciprocal nature of the Baybayanon-Sinugbuanon words *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* (human person's support and care for mother nature) and *pagbulig sa panahon* (the natural environment's favorable behavior towards the human person). These two concepts relate to the concept of democracy since they have semblances of the concepts of citizen empowerment, peaceful life, and mutual help.

The Elements of Democracy that Lead to the Realm of Environment Conservation.

Citizen Empowerment

The concepts citizen empowerment and peaceful life, as mentioned earlier, are construed by Filipinos as associated with the term democracy. It is the aspect where the state looks at its people as the country's greatest resource and their empowerment is at the heart of the state's inclusive development (Official Gazette, 2015). Citizen empowerment is very much felt in the fishermen's notion of peace since protecting the environment, specifically the seas, would not only enable fishermen to sustain the richness of their fishing grounds but also lead to the development of people's understanding of the crucial role of nature in relation to people's long term survival.

For the fishermen of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte, *Pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* (human person's support and care for the environment) refers to their efforts to protect the seas in order to maintain and sustain its capacity to support them and their families. It is the aspect that they take measures "to empower themselves" and do their share in protecting the seas. *Pagbulig* means to cooperate (Ortega, 2014) while *kinaiyahan* simply means nature or the environment (Ortega, 2014). To define it further, *Kinaiyahan* also means everything in the world that is not made by people, such as plants, animals, and weather (Streblow, 2007). Hence, *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* manifests actions that people do for nature conservation. This enables them to fulfil their obligation as stewards of the environment. By conserving nature, people would reap the good things that nature gives to humankind since it is nature's reason for being. However, it is also important to know that while nature and the seas give fishermen blessings when properly cared and preserved, it would also be very cruel and fierce when abused. Hence, when fishermen are empowered, they "can will" to push for the protection of the seas. This brings peace to the lives of fishermen. After all, a healthy sea is always abundant with fish which could sustain fishermen's lives for a longer period of time.

The concept of citizen empowerment also relates to the realm of environmental ethics. This spouses the idea of what is referred to as enlightened anthropocentrism which stresses that all moral duties that people have towards the environment are derived from their direct duties towards themselves and their fellowmen. The practical purpose of environmental ethics is to provide moral grounds for special policies aimed at protecting the earth's environment remedying environmental degradation (Norton, 1991). Moreover, it must also be noted that the kind of moral consideration appropriate to the environment should properly translate into respect, care, responsibility, or concern. Such moral respect and responsibility are consistent with the use of natural resources, provided such use is respectful and only limited to what is only necessary (Routley and Routley, 1982). In relation to the fishermen, their acts of preserving the seas and the environment as well as their expressions of respect and care of Nature are articulated in two Visayan-Cebuano words. These are *walay manglagtang* (the absence of the use of an indigenous poisons for fish) and *walay hulahop sa panagat* (the absence of fishing vessels with long nets with small holes that touch the seabed).

The words *walay manglangtang* and *walay hulahop sa panagat* express the fishermen's intervention to care and preserve the seas and the environment. These interventions are done in order to do away with fishing methods that destroy fishermen's fishing grounds in the long run. Environmentally hazardous fishing method would indubitably result to smaller yields which would make fishermen economically unstable and would greatly affect their experience of peace. The drive to eradicate fishing methods with the use of "*lagtang*" and other kinds of poisons manifests that people are empowering themselves to protect the seas and their source of livelihood. This is a manifestation that the fishermen are living the ideals of democracy. As Aristotle has asserted, in a democracy, rule is by and for the needy whose government would be run by people who would also pursue virtue (Gill, 2014). This very well fits Aristotle's notion of democracy since many, if not the majority, of small-time fishermen belong to the marginalized sector of society who are also referred to as the needy. However, in their thrust to empower themselves, the fishermen are also understood as the ones who pursue virtue since protecting the environment and the seas are virtuous undertakings. After all, for Aristotle, a virtuous person sees truly and judges rightly (Sachs, 2006) and protecting the seas and the environment are right judgments that are ought to be undertaken not only by fishermen but by every citizen of the planet.

The Visayan words *Walay manglagtang* relate to peace since it means the preservation of small young fishes. *Lagtang* is a poison derived from the seeds of *anamirta cocculus* (Umali, 2013), a locally known effective poison for fish. It can kill fishes, big and small alike, which makes fishing easy for unscrupulous fishermen. Nonetheless, this results into the eradication of fishes since they could no longer regenerate because even small fishes are caught. In sum, there would be a decrease of catch for the fishermen which also mean a decrease in income. With *walay manglagtang*, fishes could regenerate over and over since the fishermen will only catch those fish that are already mature for the catch. With this, a bountiful catch can be sustained for a long period of time, promising days of peace and prosperity for fishermen.

In conjunction with *walay manglagtang*, *walay mogamit ug hulahop sa pangisda* also means peace to fisherfolks. *Hulahop sa pangisda* is a fishing method in which fishing boats use nets that reach the seabed with very small holes in them. This assures a big catch for the fishermen. However, the result would be devastating for fishing's sustainability since the long nets would eventually destroy the corals and the nets' small holes would enable fishermen to catch big and small fishes. This again would pose a problem for the fishes to regenerate since such method of fishing includes in its catch small fishes that would someday reproduce. With the small fishes included in its catch, the fishing grounds' sustainability would be compromised and other fishermen's future catch would be greatly diminished. Hence, *walay mogamit ug hulahop sa panagat* would mean peace to the research partners because of the preservation of their fishing grounds which is their major source of income. After all, a rich fishing ground could mean bigger catch which would also translate to bigger income.

However, experience tells that undesirable things happen however hard people try to avoid it. In relation to fishermen's experiences, big fishing boats with long nets that reach the seabed or *hulahop* sometimes ply the seas of Sitio Lapawon. In some instances, these fishing boats have freely fish within local waters without being reprimanded by authorities. According to one of the respondents who asked not to be identified for security reasons, the

reason for such occurrence is that local fishermen, at times, are given a share of the catch by the operators of *hulahop* fishing. With this, said recipients have opted to stay silent instead of reporting such illegal fishing activities to proper authorities.

Nevertheless, these kinds of incidents are more of an exception rather than a rule as experienced by the fishermen of Sitio Lapawon in Baybay, Leyte. Such incidents are mostly isolated and only happen by chance. Yet, such events are semblances of the claim of the ancient Greek thinker, Isocrates, that democracy, at times, tolerates evil because people abuse their right to freedom and equality. This claim of Isocrates is quite true. In the present Philippine democratic society, there have been instances that evil has been tolerated for the sake of convenience. This tolerance towards evil is a result of the abuse to freely use one's authority. More so, this practice of misplaced tolerance is not only limited to fishing communities but has also been noticeable in the manner human beings make use of the natural environment. For instance, Malacañang's pronouncement allowing Chinese fishermen to fish within the territorial waters of the Philippines inside the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) because of the friendship between China and the Philippines seem to make the intrusion right even if it is blatantly wrong because of the fact that Malacañang says it to be so (Corrales, 2019). To add to this, Senator Tito Sotto goes further in justifying the act of allowing Chinese Fishermen in the Philippine waters by saying that the fish found in the Philippines can even come from China (Esguerra, 2019).

As a consensus, each and every person ought to protect the natural environment since it supports and sustains life on earth. Any abuse or gross exploitation of it has been, in many societies, construed as evil. Yet, many people had tolerated evil in different ways. Hence, Isocrates is right after all that in a democracy, evil tolerance is very observable especially in relation to the use of the natural environment.

Mutual Help

Mutual help is one of the aspects of the notion of democracy. In this paper, the concept of mutual help is expressed in the words *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* (human person's support and care for the natural environment) which has already been discussed earlier and *pagbulig sa panahon* (nature's favorable behavior towards the human person). For fishermen, there would only be *pagbulig sa panahon* if the notion of *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* is present or has been done already. It is a two-way process. Aside from *walay manglagtang* and *walay hulahop sa panagat*, other ways that fishermen express their thrust of *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* is by being careful of not spilling oil or gasoline into the seas and minimize unnecessary burnings of household waste materials which destroy the ozone layer that many scientist referred to as the cause of global warming. To be able to experience favorable weather conditions, fishermen must protect the environment so that the environment would also give something good to them in return. This is what fishermen refer to as *pagbulig sa panahon*.

Pagbulig sa panahon is manifested in the fishermen's understanding of the words *walay habagat* (the absence of southwest monsoon winds) and *linaw ang dagat* (calm seas). *Walay habagat* is also understood as a state of peace by fishermen. It is the absence of strong southwest monsoon winds which brings high destructive waves to the shores of many coastal fishing communities in the western part of Leyte where Baybay is situated. If there is an atmosphere of *walay habagat* in the fishing community of Sitio Lapawon, the fishermen and

their families could live in peace, even if temporary. For fishermen, *walay habagat* is equal to calm seas that suit fishing, a quiet and enjoyable neighborhood, and a place where damage to properties due to natural calamities is a distant reality. Given these things, *walay habagat* would definitely bring some degrees of peace to fishermen and their families

The words *linaw ang dagat* (calm seas) also connotes the possession of a sense of peace among fishermen. The reason for this is that, the sea and the lives of fishermen are intertwined in such a way that a peaceful sea is evidently equivalent to a peaceful life. To view peace as the absence of unwanted disturbances in one's life, the words *linaw ang dagat* connote a peaceful atmosphere where the sea is quiet and one can hear the voice from within since the sea's calmness would also calm one's inner self. After all, the word *linaw* or *kalinaw* means freedom from disturbance and agitation, calmness, hush, quiescence, tranquility, and stillness (Streblow, 2007) Thus, the sea's calmness presupposes the absence of strong winds and tall waves, reflective of the character of inner peace. For fishermen, *ang kalinaw sa dagat* would also bring *kalinaw* on one's thoughts. With this, the fishermen could simply enjoy the peace in their lives --- free from worries and problems that life cannot do without

Effects of Environment Conservation as a Result of Workings of Democratic Principles in the Lives of the Fishermen.

Peaceful Life

Going back to the relation of the notion of peace to the concept of democracy, one could indubitably notice that one of the reasons for democracy's existence is to enable people to arrive at a sense of peace and live peaceful lives. This is conceivable in the notion that democratic people wish peace. Such statement is founded on Immanuel Kant's philosophy in relation to his work "Project of Perpetual Peace" (1795). According to Kant, perpetual peace is the product of the association between states, a number of which are destined to grow because these states have the natural tendency to live together in peace (Caille, 2004). In relation to fishermen, peace is also a product of the association among the fishermen themselves since they also have the penchant to peacefully co-exist. Yet, peace is only achievable if the seas are properly taken cared of. After all, for fishermen, the sea is their life. Nevertheless, such could only be made possible if there is mutual help among them. In vernacular, fishermen call this *pagtambayayong* (collaborative effort to make things light) which comes from two Visayan words *tabang* which means help and *yayong* which means to carry (Tirol, 2010). This connotes mutual help and collaborative work which make efforts in environment conservation lighter, easier, and more achievable. If fishermen protect the seas and the natural environment, Mother Nature absolutely reciprocates. This then leads fishermen to live peaceful lives.

This observation seem to be also true in Geraldine Villaluz's (2014) study with regards to an indigenous cultural community – the Talaandig – means of achieving peace. In her book, *Nalandangan: Kulturang Kapayapaan ng Inay Malinandang ng Talaandig* (2014) Villaluz gave insights on how to understand notions of peace from people whose voices were not often heard, given importance, and articulated. Villaluz conveyed the fact that the attainment of peace could originate from a people's way of life. As an indirect way of having their culture recognized and their voices heard to the mainstream contemporary Filipino

Society, the Talaandig community's way of waging peace was primarily based on their long held customs, rituals, and traditions that had been passed on from generation to generation. Within their community, nothing could bring more peace than to adhere to the teachings and practices of their indigenous way of life. In relation to their neighboring communities, their way of bringing peace to people was still based on interpretations that were brought about by their indigenous practices. Hence, in their thrust to wage peace inside and outside of the Talaandig community, culture had a big role in determining which pathway to peace had to be followed (Villaluz, 2014). For Villaluz, peace could be taught and waged even if it is based on a way of life that was not known to many as long as it was based on sound practices that would enable the human person to possess good relations with his or her neighbour, himself or herself, to the natural environment, and with the Absolute.

Looking at the relationship between Villaluz's study and this current study, there are semblances of how peace is achieved by a given community. In the two studies taken into consideration, it is discernible that peace can be achieved if there is mutual help among neighbours as well as the aspect where the human person is at peace with the natural environment. Nevertheless, it is also noticeable that such things could have not made possible if people have not empower themselves to make such peace attaining actions operational in each of their communities. Yet, it is also highly observable that in this present and Villaluz's study, people empowerment and the ability to collaborate and mutually help each other for their and the natural environment's wellbeing for the attainment of peace could only be achieved if people are given great degrees of freedom. This enjoyment of freedom is only guaranteed in a democratic and free society where people are given opportunities to actualize themselves to the fullest, and in the process, arrive at a sense of inner peace. Hence, in one way or another, there is a relationship among the essence of democracy, the natural environment and the notion of peace.

However, things do not always happen as desired since people would sometimes over-exploit nature for their own personal interests. Nevertheless, this is just natural for democracy since people also have degrees of freedom that enable them to do what they want and desire. This is here that the challenge lies not only for fishermen but for the citizens of the country. Yet, if people are empowered, the true essence of environment conservation would fall in place. This is where mutual help and the aspect of peaceful lives among citizens come into play since if people would will to protect Mother Nature, it would not be impossible to achieve. With this at hand, citizens could live a peaceful life which is construed as one of the many characteristics of democracy.

4. CONCLUSION

This study therefore concludes that peace can only be achieved if fishermen live in harmony with nature. Man must establish harmony instead of mastery over the environment so that the environment's behavior would also be in harmony with the fishermen's way of life (Swee-Hin, 1987). Moreover, this study also concludes that attaining peace is more enhanced if people striving for it live in a democratic society. This conclusion fits to the experiences of the fishermen of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte which is a part of the Republic of the Philippines, a democratic country. In a democratic country, people have the right to live in an environmentally peaceful place where they can also freely allow themselves to protect the environment around them so that they could also continue reaping

the benefits that Mother gives to them. As Section 16, Article 2 of the 1987 constitution puts it: “The state shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthy ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature”.

Furthermore, this study also concludes that the notion of citizen empowerment, which is a product of the concept of democracy, is a significant factor in the fishermen’s attainment of peace. In the thrust to attain peace, fishermen use their powers that are inherent in them as citizens of the state and of their community to protect of what is left of the natural environment. But as Justice Renato Puno has observed, the Filipinos’ thrust of environmental protections is not an easy task since Philippine environmental laws are still at their cradle years. Although the embryo of environmentalism has long been implanted into the Filipino consciousness by indigenous customs and traditions, it has not, until recently been translated into a body of coherent national policies and legal principles (Puno, 2003). Yet, this study’s research partners – the fishermen – have not been constrained with this reality since they went out of their way to save what remains of their fishing grounds.

Lastly, this study concludes that the notions of mutual help and peaceful life made it possible for the fishermen to arrive at a sense of peace. With the aim to experience peaceful life, the fishermen have come to a realization that they have to protect the seas since their lives are closely intertwined with the seas. The sea is their life. Hence, in achieving this, the fishermen have helped each other so that they could protect of what is left of the fishing grounds near their shores. A rich fishing ground means bigger catch for any given fishing day. With bigger catch, there is bigger income which could sustain fishermen’s lives for a longer period of time. This eventually leads the fishermen to the attainment of peaceful lives since they have done their part in the aspect of protecting the sea in which their lives are basically intertwined since for many fishermen, the sea is their life.

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