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**THE BIBINGKA STRATEGY TO LAND REFORM AND IMPLEMENTATION:  
AUTONOMOUS PEASANT MOBILIZATIONS AND STATE REFORMISTS IN THE  
PHILIPPINES**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Considerations</b>	<b>1</b>
- The Problem	
- Hypothesis	
- Theoretical Discussion	
- Introduction to the Country Case Study	
- Methods	
- Scope and Limitation of the Study	
- Organization of the Paper	
<b>Chapter 2: Land Reform Imperatives and Initiatives: A National-Level Perspective</b>	<b>18</b>
- Background	
- Salient Features of CARP	
- CARP Accomplishment	
- The Peasant Movement	
- National-level Symbiotic Interaction Between Pro-Reform State and Societal Actors	
<b>Chapter 3: Land Reform Struggles and Victories: A Local-Level Perspective</b>	<b>40</b>
- Case One: <i>Sitio</i> Poultry	
- Case Two: Stanfilco	
- Case Three: Candaba-San Luis	
- Case Four: Maloles	
- Case Five: Greenfields	
- Summary	
<b>Chapter 4: Lessons and Conclusions</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>69</b>





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### 1. The Problem

The Chiapas uprising caught the world by surprise in 1993. It was a violent indigenous peasant revolt rooted in the socio-economic exclusion of poor peasants and historical political conflict over control of indigenous lands. In Brazil, not long ago since the assassination of Chico Mendes, landless peasants today have continued to invade lands despite violent suppression by landlords and the police. In South Africa at present, political conflict over the uncertain disposition of lands whose private ownership was established during the apartheid regime which excluded majority of black peasants poses a serious threat to the country's democratic transition. In Zimbabwe, there is a fast emerging political polarization between the white commercial farmers and black rural population over the issue of land redistribution. A year or two ago, in Andalusia, Spain, several peasants who invaded lands and barricaded railtracks demanding agrarian policy reforms were violently dispersed and imprisoned. In not a distant past, Nicaraguan peasants have also staked their lives for land. And ten years ago, in the Philippines, thirteen peasants demanding land reform were gunned down by the military in front of the presidential palace in Manila. Struggles over control and ownership of land continue to be a key feature of contemporary political conflicts in different parts of the world today, whether in predominantly agrarian societies such as the Philippines, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, "transitional economies" that still have important agrarian sector such as Brazil and South Africa, and even in a "first world" country like Spain.

These are only the most visible examples of contemporary political conflicts involving struggle for land which have great implications for national political dynamics. These struggles involved life-and-death issues for peasants who consider land not just a factor of economic production, but also as an integral part of their social and cultural being, as it is a political resource to many. Against the background of these land-based conflicts, many policy "experts" worldwide talk about the irrelevance and non-feasibility of truly redistributive land reform in the neoliberal era. But for the socially and politically excluded and economically marginalized peasants, truly redistributive land reform remains the main public policy instrument through which "social justice" can be realized together with inclusive rural economic development.

In many parts of Asia, Latin America and Africa today, land reform as a social justice and rural economic development measure has yet to be realized fully, while the rise of neoliberalism has created an environment increasingly unfavorable for "deep social reforms," especially agrarian reform (Barracough, 1994:16-21).<sup>1</sup> Five broadly distinct currents of land tenure transformation are observable worldwide. First, countries which had substantial land reforms in the past are now seeing the collectivist reformed sectors privatized (*e.g.* Mexico). Second, previously "preserved" indigenous communal lands are being privatized (*e.g.* Bolivia, Peru and many African countries). Third, a similar process is taking place in many "socialist economies in transition" (*e.g.* several countries in Eastern Europe, China, and Vietnam), as state farm collectives are being dismantled into individual private plots. These three currents have reinforced international public opinion against deep reforms in developing countries, many of which have yet to see far-reaching land

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<sup>1</sup> The declaration of the World Food Summit in Rome in November 1996 did not even mention *agrarian reform* (Windfuhr, 1997:7).

reform.<sup>2</sup> The fourth current then is characterized by what can be termed “agrarian reform avoidance” -- in countries like Brazil, truly redistributive versions of agrarian reform are being blocked from or edged out of the national policy agenda by political and economic elites determined to rework their societies along neoliberal lines. Finally, the anti-land reform policy currents figuring out in fourth current settings are also operative in the fifth current which can be labelled as “modest advance” in land reform.” In only a very few countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa and the Philippines land reform policies are currently implemented to a modest extent.<sup>3</sup> But the implementation of these policies are presently facing greater difficulties and uncertainties in light of the changed global and national contexts hostile to truly redistributive land reforms. Under the guidance of the World Bank, the very definition of agrarian reform is being adjusted from “land-to-the-tiller” to “democratization of access to land,”<sup>4</sup> while land reform, once viewed as a public policy, is being recast as a “market-based” transaction. In short, agrarian reform as a social justice and rural economic development measure is under siege.<sup>5</sup>

There is an emerging consensus among close observers of land reform processes coming from diverse theoretical traditions that the already difficult problem of land reform policymaking and implementation in fourth and fifth current settings have become even more so, since the current global and national contexts have increased incentives for landlords to resist land reform, while creating the condition where the “room for maneuver” of the peasantry to push for such reform has been shrinking. This emerging consensus builds on a persistent policy dilemma, *i.e.* significant structural and institutional changes are often considered to be necessary prerequisites for land reform implementation, but how are the structural and institutional changes deemed necessary in these specific contexts achieved if not through land reform? The implication of this “chicken and egg” problem<sup>6</sup> is that the only solution is to carry out a radical version of land reform, which in turn can only be done through a revolutionary change in the national polity, either through armed insurrections like in Nicaragua and China, through popular electoral victories of radical groups like in Chile under Allende or in Kerala (India), or under “special geopolitical circumstances” as in post-war Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan. But such cases have been generally rare historically. Under the current neoliberal setting where socialist alternatives are on the retreat, possibilities for such radical societal transformation appears even more remote.<sup>7</sup> Thus, specifically referring to (often socialist-inspired) collectivist types of land reforms, Kay (1997:24) concludes: “the era of radical type agrarian reforms is over.”

<sup>2</sup> Refer to edited volume by Randall (1995) for the Mexican case; for some eastern European countries, refer to recent edited volume by Spoor (1997); see Dao The Tuan (1997:156-169) for the Vietnamese case. It must be noted though that it is not the concern of this study to assess the *pros* and *cons* of decollectivization or privatization of collective reformed sector and communal lands which are a complex issue. The main point why they are cited here is to underscore the fact that radical land reforms as traditionally understood had almost always involved collectivist components alongside the promotion of family farms. The widespread dismantling of collective reformed sectors in many parts of the world has thus created an atmosphere in policy circles against “land reform,” whether collective or family farm-based or combination of the two.

<sup>3</sup> See Kinsey (1997) for Zimbabwe; Levin and Weiner (1996:93-119) and Murray (1996:209-244) for South Africa. Armenia and Romania are also pointed out as examples - see Lipton (1997:1006).

<sup>4</sup> The phrase “access to land” does not necessarily involve reconstitution of land ownership since a tenant-farmer can have access to land while remaining a tenant. For example, see World Bank (1996:13-15).

<sup>5</sup> For the Philippine case, refer to two recent “confidential” draft recommendations by the World Bank (1997a, 1997b) and World Bank (1996); see also earlier related recommendation by Hayami, Quisumbing and Adriano (1990). For a “word of caution,” see Lipton (1993) where he re-argues the continuing relevance of some “old modalities” like land-ownership ceiling; for a related neoliberalism-land reform analysis, see Atkins (1988).

<sup>6</sup> See Herring (1983) for analysis of South Asian cases. In the Brazilian case, Tavares (1995:29) observes that “[t]he slogan of the rural social movements during the democratic transition was ‘without land, there is no democracy.’ Today, the situation seems to have been inverted: ‘without democracy, there is no land.’” For Central America, refer to Brockett (1988) where he concludes not with an answer on how to carry out truly redistributive land reform, but rather just a reiteration of the dilemma. He says: “The dilemma for advocates of major land redistribution in Central America is clear, then. Substantial redistributive programs attack the fundamental interests of powerful groups, which will use their power to oppose major reforms. The result will be considerable political conflict” (p.200).

<sup>7</sup> Environmental concerns are increasingly used to re-argue the case for land reform, *e.g.* Thiesenhusen (1995:180-181).

In many countries, the conservative type of land reform characterized primarily by distribution of public lands without disturbance to private estates failed to address the twin goals of land reform, *i.e.* both as a social justice and economic development measure. The pragmatic option thus appears to be to effect land reform through a policy that falls somewhere in between the radical and conservative versions, and so while it should be far-reaching, it is necessarily carried out within the overall existing structural and institutional make-up of a specific national setting.<sup>8</sup> However, given the often poor track record where this option has been taken, there is a general tendency among scholars and activists alike to conclude that the prospects for redistributive land reform are indeed bleak.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, though perhaps unintentionally, this emerging consensus about the deteriorating prospects for land reform may be helping to reinforce “agrarian reform avoidance” policy currents, providing “ammunition” to those looking to justify elimination of land reform from the national agenda. But while the only resolution of the “chicken and egg” problem of land reform may appear to be abandonment of the land reform project altogether, the starting point of this paper is that not all the evidence is in, and closer examination of the problem is needed.

## 2. Research Questions and Objectives

The underlying issue is whether the outcomes of land reform policy are determined by structural factors alone, or whether political dynamics can lead to unanticipated outcomes of land reform policy. Evidence from the Philippines reveals some curious “breaks” in the “chicken and egg” dilemma. In several cases, despite landlord opposition, private estates were expropriated by the state and redistributed to peasants. That these “success stories” occurred on contested private landholdings suggests that the land reform dilemma is not as structurally “fixed,” and so insurmountable, as is usually assumed. With specific reference to highly contentious private landholdings, the main question asked here is: *“under what conditions can land reform be implemented successfully in a politically hostile (neoliberal) environment?”*

By highlighting “success stories,” this study challenges a persistent dichotomy in the literature between those who view the outcomes of land reform policy as predetermined by structural-institutional factors (or prior distribution of power in society), and those who emphasize the role of policy elites (policymakers and managers) in carrying out redistributive land reform. These contending explanations about public policy outcomes are also referred to as the “state-centered approach” on the one hand, and the “society-centered approach” on the other. State-centered approaches appropriately raise the importance of state action “from above,” but tend to overlook the structural and institutional obstacles or constraints which can often undermine reformist projects by the state. Society-centered approaches often correctly identify key structural-institutional obstacles to land reform, but usually fail to recognize how political action can also under certain conditions overcome those obstacles (These approaches will be analyzed at length further below). By explaining the key factors that accounted for these “success stories” of land reform implementation, this study hopes to contribute some insights into the practical problem of how to carry out land reform in other private estates in the Philippines in particular, and in countries facing similar conditions more generally.

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<sup>8</sup> As Brocket (1991:260) argues: “Outside of rare revolutionary transformations, the claims of the disadvantaged are handled, if at all, within existing political structures.”

<sup>9</sup> The “poor performance” referred to here includes both the extent of land redistribution and the economic performance of the “reformed sector.” Refer to de Janvry (1981), de Janvry and Sadoulet (1989a, 1989b), C.D. Deere (1985), Thiesenhusen (1989,1995), Dorner (1992), and Kay (forthcoming).

### 3. Hypothesis

Drawing on various relevant works of Fox,<sup>10</sup> the main hypothesis of this study is that land reform can be implemented in politically hostile settings when a “positive interaction” occurs between pro-reform mobilizations “from below” and pro-reform initiatives “from above,” and where the landlord fails to match such a pro-reform alliance.

The term *pro-reform mobilization “from below”* refers here to collective actions by peasant groups and their allies to implement land reform. Specifically, peasant mobilization may take a variety of forms, from “extra-legal” land occupation to dialogue with state agencies. There is basic consensus in the literature that peasant mobilization is necessary for land reform. But while peasant mobilization is a necessary factor, alone it is not sufficient for successful land reform implementation. Local peasant groups often need allies for political and logistical reasons. Village-level organization and collective action are indispensable, but without allies they can be easily isolated and defeated by their adversaries.<sup>11</sup> Other pro-reform societal actors are crucial especially in extending the political reach of peasant collective action beyond the local level. For the purposes of this study, “other pro-reform societal actors” include national leaderships of peasant organizations, national and provincial non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political movements, and the media.<sup>12</sup>

But while local peasant mobilization supported by other pro-reform societal actors can strengthen pro-land reform initiatives from below, the actual impact of such initiatives may still be weak if they fail to interact with the state or to make use of “openings” from above. The term *pro-reform initiatives “from above”* refers here to actions by some state actors intended to implement the goals set by the land reform policy. In this paper, state reformists are broadly defined as actors within the state that are tolerant or even supportive of social mobilization from below. (Fox, 1992a:29-33). These openings from above can either be the result of independent initiatives by state reformists, or a response to social pressures. But state reformists are often challenged by anti-reform forces within the state and in society, and so they themselves need allies in society to realize the goals set by a land reform program.

The occurrence of pro-reform mobilizations from below side by side with pro-reform initiatives from above does not necessarily mean they interact, or positively interact, with each other. If they do not, the possibility for land reform is extremely limited. The most promising condition is when there is a *positive (or symbiotic) interaction* between the two streams of pro-reform initiatives that reinforces rather than undermines each other. This synergy usually entails a conscious political strategizing on the part of each of the two camps that are “autonomous” from each other, while coming together in a symbiotic fashion to implement land reform despite possible differences in motivations and long-term goals.

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<sup>10</sup> For the main theoretical framing, this paper draws from Fox (1992a) which is a study about a *distributive* reform (*i.e.* village food councils) in Mexico in the early 1980s. The point of departure is that while it takes cue from Fox’s theoretical insights, the main concern of this study is *redistributive* reform (*i.e.*, land reform). One difference between the two is the fact that the latter normally involves a “zero-sum” game, while distributive reforms may not necessarily be so (*e.g.* subsidized food stores) which may not necessarily be a zero-sum game. Although the actual difference between the two may often be blurred, the redistributive type of reforms generally entails stronger opposition by those who would be negatively affected (*e.g.* landlords). Other works of Fox from which this study draws analytic insights are: 1990, 1992b, 1992c, 1994, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, and Fox and Hernandez (1992).

<sup>11</sup> See Fox (1990, 1992b) and Brocket (1988) for elaboration.

<sup>12</sup> International institutions and actors also play important roles as either pro- or anti-land reform advocates. However, their roles will be recognized and pointed out but not analyzed at length in this study mainly due to space limitation.

However, while greatly increasing the strength of pro-reform forces, a positive interaction between pro-reform societal groups and state reformists, does not automatically lead to land reform implementation. Landlords can be expected to resist the effort to implement land reform in a variety of ways, including mobilizing their allies within the state and in society. These anti-reform alliances may include rural elites, urban-based elites, local police and military as well as paramilitary groups, government bureaucrats, and international institutions. The political network of landlords often reaches far beyond the village-level while that of peasant groups involved in land conflicts tends to remain localized. If the extent and intensity of a landlord's organized strength surpass that of the pro-reform forces, then land reform is unlikely to be implemented. But *when and where landlords fail to match the organized strength attained by pro-reform groups in society and enhanced by positive interaction with reformists within the state*, land reform is more likely to be implemented.

In summary, landlords succeed in evading or blocking land reform implementation when they are able to muster sufficient support from allies within the state and in society. The most promising strategy by which anti-reform alliances can be overcome is a mutually reinforcing interaction between societal and state pro-reform forces. Fox (1992a) calls this the "sandwich strategy." In this paper, I will call this the "*bibingka strategy*" (*bibingka* is a native Filipino rice cake baked in a homemade two-layer oven, where in each panel on top of and underneath the cake are smouldering charcoals) to highlight the situation that the state and society are marked by often heated conflicts between pro-and anti-reform forces going on simultaneously at different levels.

#### 4. Theoretical Discussion

Addressing the main question of this research, this section will revolve around the four key factors set out in my hypothesis, namely, social mobilization from below, pro-reform initiatives from above, positive interaction between pro-reform forces within the state and in society, and the ability to surpass the level of resistance to land reform posed by the landlords. A brief review of the two main contending theoretical approaches to explanations of policy outcomes, *i.e.* state- and society-centered approaches, will be made highlighting the strength and weaknesses of each approach. Building on the strength of each approach, this section goes beyond the dichotomy in existing literature by using Fox's (1992a) "interactive approach" to state-society relations.<sup>13</sup>

*4.1. State-centered approach.* The key units of analysis of this approach are the state, policy elites (policymakers and managers) and the agencies or organizations responsible for carrying out public policies. Exponents of this approach, many of whom are coming from the Weberian theoretical tradition, take the state as an institution of governance autonomous from society. Taking the state as an independent actor and independent variable, state-centered scholars often assume that the state is autonomous in making policy choices and in transforming them into authoritative actions even when these runs counter to the interests of the dominant classes or groups in society. Such an approach recognizes different, often conflicting, political currents within the state and the fact that the character of reform breeds the kind of conflict within the state.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This is consistent with the sociological perspective of Long (1988:108-133) along "structural-actor-oriented approach."

<sup>14</sup> Good examples of this approach are Grindle and Thomas (1989), Thomas and Grindle (1990) and Nordlinger (1987).

Many scholars in this approach place a premium on the administrative design of the policy, believing that if carried out by an efficient state organization, such a policy has little reason to fail.<sup>15</sup> Relatedly, in recognition of the practical administrative, technical, fiscal and institutional limitations of the state, state-centered approaches often view social actors such as peasant organizations and NGOs as necessary complements to their reformist efforts. This realization has led many policy elites to try to form government-sponsored peasant organizations, or to reach out to existing community organizations in order to reshape them within their own narrow parameters by assigning them specific “supporting roles” in policy implementation. This is true whether the organizational process is top-down or “participatory.” Concerned with efficient policy implementation, policy elites tend to assume a one-way, conflict-free interaction between societal actors and the state bureaucracy. Rooted in the concept of a relationship of unequals, state actors often view their task as a mission of transforming societal actors according to their own “image and likeness.” In most cases, peasant organizations and NGOs end up being co-opted by the state, gradually losing their autonomy, if originally organized outside the state initiative.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, founded on the premise of state autonomy, state-centered approaches posit that state intervention can overcome structural and institutional obstacles mounted by landlords. This can be done, according to this view, by mustering sufficient “political will” to effect reform, efficient administrative and technical organization, and sufficient funding to finance redistributive land reform.<sup>17</sup>

*4.2. Society-centered approach.* Taking social classes and interest group formations in society as their key units of analysis, advocates of a society-centered approach identify social mobilization from below as the key to land reform implementation. These scholars, mostly from the Marxist tradition, emphasize the inherent structural and institutional obstacles to reform and the “captivity” of the state to the interests of the dominant social classes; the state then is assumed to have no autonomy. Some stress the influence social forces exert directly on the state, while others highlight the external constraints they impose (Fox, 1992a). In this approach, the activities of the state and policy elites are understood to be dependent variables. Thus, the policy choices and the behavior of policy elites can be predicted on the basis of an analysis of class and group formations in society or in the international arena.<sup>18</sup>

Viewing social mobilization from below, analysts from this approach tend to argue that pro-reform forces must pressure the state to implement land reform. Effective peasant organizations, NGOs and political movements, according to this view, must necessarily be “independent” from the state. Moreover, social mobilization from below sets the parameters, extent, and location of reforms; state actors only react to such pressures. The relationship between pro-reform societal actors with the state is necessarily conflict-ridden, where only oppositional pressure politics is the most effective way to press for reforms. Along this logic, societal actors must transform state actors for redistributive reforms to see even partial implementation. Finally, focusing the analysis on social classes and class alignments based on static view of the “prior distribution of power” in society, this approach argues that to overcome

<sup>15</sup> For example, see the tendency toward this line by Prosterman and Riedinger (1987), especially the book’s concluding part.

<sup>16</sup> This is a very common state strategy toward peasant organizations. For a related study about Marcos’s land reform and initiatives toward peasant organizing program (e.g. *Samahang Nasyon* and Federation of Free Farmers), see Po and Montiel (1980).

<sup>17</sup> Debates on the authoritarian-democratic regime *vis-a-vis* land reform are premised on this concept. See Tai (1974) where he theorized that the “political commitment” of the state decisively affects the extent of program implementation; contrast this with Riedinger (1995) who concludes that “authoritarian rule is neither sufficient nor necessary to effectuate redistributive land reform.”

<sup>18</sup> Grindle and Thomas (1990) observe that while many in the policy sciences embrace state-centered approach, the social and political sciences are dominated by society-centered perspective. Examples of the latter are Putzel (1992) and Putzel and Cunningham (1989).

the structural and institutional obstacles to land reform, substantial, even if partial, structural and institutional changes must first occur within the state and in society.

On the one hand, the problem with the state-centered approach is its over-emphasis on the autonomy of the state and the capacity of policy elites, that lead it to overlook the weight of structural-institutional factors, societal groups and international institutions in obstructing redistributive reforms. It has difficulty in explaining why good public policies on redistributive reforms implemented by capable administrative organizations and sufficiently funded can still fail. On the other, the difficulty with the society-centered approach is its over-emphasis on the significance of structural-institutional factors, societal groups and international institutions, neglecting the weight of the role of state and policy elites in conceptualizing and implementing redistributive reforms. It cannot easily explain why in some cases some state actors take autonomous actions that run counter to the interests of the dominant classes in society.

In treating state-society relations in a one-way fashion, both approaches have difficulty explaining why in many cases societal actors attempt to influence and transform state actors, but in the process of doing so are themselves transformed, and *vice versa*. Specifically on peasant mobilization, society-centered approaches often have difficulty grappling with the issue of why in many cases, the actions of strong independent peasant movements have led not to land redistribution, but to violent retribution by the state and landlords. Meanwhile, state-centered approaches also have difficulty explaining why in most cases co-opted peasant organizations (often organized by policy elites as part of the state's extended administrative machinery) fail to perform even the "supporting roles" assigned to them.<sup>19</sup> In short, both approaches appropriately identify conflict as a characteristic of the state-society relations, but usually fail to show that (or explain why and how) through conflict state and societal actors are both transformed.

In light of this theoretical gap, an alternative approach developed by Fox (1992a) is adopted in this study. An "interactive approach" to state-society relations is one that, while building on the strength of the two approaches, tries to address their respective weaknesses. Such an approach requires differentiating between state autonomy and state capacity, while also drawing on key insights from the rich literature on land reform, peasant mobilization, social movements, and public policy, respectively. The discussion below is organized along the four key elements of the hypothesis of this study.

*4.3. An "interactive approach" to state-society relations.* This approach is the one employed in this study. An attempt toward such an interactive approach requires a recasting of the dichotomous views of the state as either autonomous from or an instrument of social classes - a dichotomy largely influenced by the contending perspectives of Marx and Weber. Neither of the two alone can explain the land reform implementation process in the Philippines. As Bright and Harding (1984:4) argue: "[s]tates are institutions of governance, as in Weber, and they are central agents of social order and reproduction, as in Marx," but "such characterizations pale before the

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<sup>19</sup> Many of the analyses of successful, albeit limited, cases of land reform implementation in Latin America sweepingly conclude that strong social mobilization from below was the key to such successes, even when such studies were clearly looking at empirical data where it was precisely the symbiotic interaction between state reformists and pro-reform societal actors that accounted for such successes. A good example of this "misreading" is Huizer and Stavenhagen (1974) where the two renowned scholars, in analyzing the Lázaro Cárdenas land reform in Mexico conclude that it was because of strong peasant movement that some 800,000 peasant households got lands during the 1930s. But that after the 1940s, land reform did not go any further because of the waning of the peasant movement's influence. Of course, the administration of Cárdenas was mentioned as a factor, but then in the end the conclusion was a "peasant mobilization-centered" one. It could not fully explain why prior to Cárdenas land reform was not carried out despite the same strong peasant mobilization; or why after Cárdenas the peasant movement dissipated and land reform was virtually abandoned by succeeding political regimes. Grindle (1988:62-63 cited in Thiesenhusen, 1995:160) identified the three elements raised in the hypothesis of this paper in explaining the success of land reform in Mexico in the 1930s, but does not explain how these elements work.



fantastic diversity and fluidity of form, function, and malfunction that current studies of states and political processes reveal.” As the two scholars conclude: “[s]tates are neither static givens lording over society nor subservient by-products of other social forces.” It is thus appropriate to adopt the more eclectic and useful definition of the state offered by Fox (1992a:11-12): “[t]he state comprises the *ensemble* of political, social, economic, and coercive institutions that exercise ‘public’ authority in a given territory.”<sup>20</sup>

An explanation of the actions of the state requires a clarification of the two dimensions of state power, namely, autonomy and capacity. Autonomy refers here to the independent goal formation of the state (Skocpol:1985:9 cited in Fox,1992a:12), while state capacity is defined as the ability of state leaders to use the agencies of the state to get people in the society to do what they want them to (Migdal,1988:xi). Distinguishing autonomy from capacity clarifies the understanding of state actions, and helps to move the analysis beyond the widely used dichotomy between state strength and weakness which implicitly treats the state as a single actor and inherently conflates autonomy and capacity (Fox,1992a:12). For instance, a state may have the autonomy to pursue redistributive land reform, but may have no capacity to implement it, and conversely, it may have the capacity to implement the reform but no autonomy to pursue it. Either way, land reform will not be carried out.

Moreover, policies are not static. During the conflict-ridden process of implementation, the policy is transformed by politics, and *vice versa* (Skocpol and Amenta,1986) as the policy is put in the crucible of state-society relations where changes in the balance of power within the state dynamically interacts with the shifting alignments of forces in society. Through conflict state and society actors are each transformed. (Fox,1992a).

This brief clarification of some conceptual issues with regard to the state and state power should guide the discussions below regarding social mobilization from below, pro-reform initiatives from above, positive interaction between pro-reform forces within the state and in society, and the ability to overcome landlord resistance to redistributive land reform.

*4.3.1. Social mobilization from below.* Peasants, or all rural cultivators of low economic and political status,<sup>21</sup> are not passive societal actors as many written materials about their political behavior have suggested. On the one hand, the literature on peasant mobilization has revealed the extent of peasants’ participation in grand historical wars that transformed societies, such as the German peasant war of 1525, the French revolution of 1789, and numerous wars during the twentieth century as well.<sup>22</sup> On the other, the literature on “everyday forms of peasant resistance”

<sup>20</sup> The debate on state-society relations within the Marxist tradition is partly due to the fact that Marx left his own two rather competing views about the state. One of these views would later be developed by Poulantzas (1978) around the concept of “relative autonomy,” and the other is the concept of “state as instrument of class rule” later developed by Lenin (*State and Revolution*). See Held (1983:23-24) for an historical overview and also Jessop (1990). For the original texts, see *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* by Marx. For an original contribution to this debate and further elaboration on state and (civil) society relations, see *Selections from Prison Notebooks* of Antonio Gramsci (1971:206-275).

<sup>21</sup> This definition by Landsberger (1974:17) is useful in this study for two reasons. First, this study is aware of the differentiation among peasants, but it cannot be sufficiently addressed in this paper because of lack of space. Second, societal and state actors active in land reform question in the Philippines tend to take peasants to mean the same definition used by Landsberger. For related more insights about peasants’ definition, see Shanin (1987:1-11); Wolf (1966); and on the various factors about the process of peasant differentiation, see White (1989:15-30).

<sup>22</sup> For an enlightening material on the German peasant war which is deemed to have traces of a “new type of movement,” refer to the special issue of the *Journal of Peasants Studies* edited by Bak (1975, Vol. 3); and refer to Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* for his analysis of peasant participation during the French Revolution. For an interesting study of “land reform” (or land redistribution) issue during the French revolution, see Markoff (1997:1113-1142) where he shows how “both elite action and insurrectionary (rural) mobilization were shaping each other.” Among the many materials written about the twentieth century wars, Wolf’s (1969) classic book is an excellent reference. See also Skocpol (1979, 1988), Popkin (1979) in reference to Vietnam, Paige (1975) identifying peasants in export crops as the most likely to rebel; Desai and Eckstein



has shown the “daily texture” of peasant politics.<sup>23</sup> These works have contributed to the understanding of the political behavior of peasants. However, the dichotomy in the literature between full-scale war and “everyday politics” tends to miss a great portion of rural political dynamics, *i.e.* in between all-out peasant revolution and daily resistance like pilfering and footdragging, there are other political activities ranging from “land occupation” to organization-building to negotiations with the state. There were several studies of these “middle-range” activities, but most are in the context of understanding the revolutionary character of the peasants, or how these activities lead to full-scale revolution.<sup>24</sup> They are thus focusing on rare events since in most cases these mid-range peasant actions do not lead to full-scale revolutions (Brocket, 1991:260; Fox, 1996a). This thus paper hopes to contribute to filling the gap in literature.

Peasant collective action requires two minimum factors. First, there should be a perception of shared interests or identities among peasants.<sup>25</sup> This is “a collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate opportunity and action” (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996:2). Collective identity is inherently dynamic, as “it is constructed and negotiated through a repeated process of ‘activation’ of social relationship connecting the actors” (Melucci, 1985:793; 1992). This collective perception may cut “horizontally” based on social class divisions, or “vertically” by transcending social class divisions to include other social identities such as community, gender, ethnicity, ideology, or even of a shared “elite patron” (Alavi, 1973).<sup>26</sup> Second, peasants usually do not immediately engage in overt actions (partly because of the entrenched patron-client relationships), as the “everyday forms of resistance” literature demonstrates.<sup>27</sup> In a calculated fashion, most peasant collective actions are preceded by a general feeling that in collective action there is a good chance to realize their goals.

When peasants mobilize, the activity is usually confined to the boundaries of their community and its immediate vicinity because of limited political and logistical resources. Such level and extent of collective action is usually not enough to move them closer to realizing their goals, especially with regard to land reform, chiefly because the landlords resist such reforms at a level far beyond the municipality. When confronted by a failure to realize their goals, many peasants recoil, but some persist. The opening up of “political opportunities” can encourage peasants to persist in their mobilization beyond the municipality.

Political opportunity is “the consistent (but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national,) signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form a social movement” (Tarrow: 1994:54).<sup>28</sup> For peasants, a political

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(1990), Huizer (1972a, 1972b, 1975, 1979), Migdal (1974); and McClintock (1984) taking Peru’s *Sendero Luminoso* as a case in point. See Hawes (1990) for the peasant-based revolution in the Philippines.

<sup>23</sup> See Scott (1985, 1976), Scott and Kerkvliet (eds.) (1986), and Colburn (ed.) (1989). For the Philippine context, see Kerkvliet (1990, 1993). While the intermittent explosions of the covert but pervasive daily forms of peasant resistance such as arson may be able to put peasant issues like land reform onto the agenda, such actions are insufficient when the issue is how to implement such a redistributive reform. Refer also Gutmann’s (1993) interesting critique of Scott.

<sup>24</sup> The various works of Huizer (1972a, 1972b, 1975, 1979,) are a good example along this current.

<sup>25</sup> Taken from Fox (1992a). Collective action here is that which “consists of all occasions in which sets of people commit pooled resources including their own efforts, to common ends” (Tilly, 1981:17); while “social movement” which shall be used interchangeably in this paper is defined as “network of social interactions between plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity (Diani: 1992:13). See also Tilly (1993/94) and Touraine (1985).

<sup>26</sup> For studies about the “new” peasant movement in neoliberal era, refer to the edited volume by Brass (1995) about the Indian debate.

<sup>27</sup> For a recent nuanced study of patron-client ties in rural areas in Asia and how these ties are eroded, see Platteau (1995).

<sup>28</sup> Brocket (1991:254) offers another working definition: “the configuration of forces in a (potential or actual) group’s political environment that influences that group’s assertion of its political claims.” He purposely defines the configuration of forces in unspecified manner for greater flexibility in taking into account the uniqueness of particular cases. See also Tarrow (1996).

opportunity may come in the form of available external allies.<sup>29</sup> These allies provide the necessary political and logistical support frequently inaccessible and unaffordable to peasants, such as transportation costs to and from provincial and national government offices, accommodation expenses in urban centers in cases where they have to stay for several days doing lobby work, propaganda materials to amplify their demands in public, contact with the media and other influential groups, further understanding of the technical aspects of the law, as well as legal advice and aid. Allies can also help peasant groups to identify the proper state actors and “access routes” to state power for the maximum impact of their mobilization.

The concept of peasant allies is a widely studied subject, and peasants’ “wariness” toward “outsiders,” or “outsiders”’ disdain of peasants’ political behavior is often highlighted in the literature.<sup>30</sup> But as Fox (1992c:38-42) points out, it is not the need of having allies *per se* that peasants are usually wary of, but rather the *terms* of such a relationship. Peasant allies support their demands and actions because of their own motivations ranging from ideological, political and institutional agendas. These agendas generally tend to encourage allies to try to reshape and stretch the parameters and targets of peasant collective action beyond what the peasants might have originally intended.<sup>31</sup> The peasants may still subscribe to this set-up as long as their major, usually immediate, concerns are addressed in such a relationship. But in the event of these allies neglecting such compelling concerns of the peasants, the latter gradually demobilize or eventually abandon such an alliance and seek out other allies.

But even where the pro-reform alliance is vibrant, such a combined force may not be sufficient to effect redistributive reforms if it still lags behind the expected escalating and expanding landlord resistance. This is because social mobilization from below may well provoke “countermobilization” (Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996) from the landlord and other affected actors. Under a redistributive reform such as land reform, this mobilization-countermobilization process usually happens in a calibrated escalation of forms and intensity. When this occurs, state actors may increasingly be drawn into the conflict.

4.3.2. *Pro-reform initiatives from above.* State actors are groups of officials whose actions push or pull in the same political direction (Fox, 1992a:28-33); such a unit of analysis is different from the concept of “policy elites” by Grindle and Thomas (1989, 1990) which is inherently limited and not very useful as an analytical unit to this study. Many state organizations are “composed of a *range* of actors with different interests, who struggle to control the agency, to determine its goals, and to decide how to pursue them.” A combination of complex “material, institutional and ideological goals motivate state actors.” In most cases too, “state actors with any power share a common interest in perpetuating state rule because it is a necessary precondition for advancing whatever their particular agendas might be” (Fox, 1992a:29) which can partly be seen through political party affiliation and nature of appointments.<sup>32</sup>

No single explanation about state actors’ actions can fully account for the actual reality. However, as Fox (1992a:30-31) shows, the concept of the twin foundations of state rule of *accumulation* and *legitimation* (“the continuation of private capital accumulation and the

<sup>29</sup> Other variables identified by Tarrow and Brocket will be discussed further below; refer also to Singelmann (1981) especially p.205.

<sup>30</sup> A classic reader in this regard is Engel’s *Peasant War in Germany*; For a critical review of this work, see Bak *et al* (1975:89-135).

<sup>31</sup> As Brocket argues (1991:258): “Support groups and allies, then, are ‘catalysts for change’ because they alter the structure of political opportunities.” But “[w]hat is important here about such groups is not their intentions but rather the consequences of their actions for the constellation of power relations surrounding the peasantry.”

<sup>32</sup> For interesting studies regarding the Philippine bureaucracy in general, refer to de Guzman, Reforma and Panganiban (eds.) (1988), and de Guzman, Brillantes, and Pacho (1988:180-200).

preservation of some historically conditioned minimum of political legitimacy,” respectively) can offer powerful insights in terms of the broader context where state actors can exercise autonomy (see also Poulantzas, 1974 and 1978).<sup>33</sup> For example, some state actors oppose redistributive land reform in so-called productive private estates because they put premium on the contribution of these estates to national capital accumulation; yet some state actors may oppose these by invoking the issue of “social justice” or political democratization. These are two permanent but often contradictory tasks to be performed invariably by all state actors, and to understand how state actors attempt to balance conflicting demands for accumulation and legitimation, “one must specify the nature of their interaction with the contending forces making those demands” (Fox, 1992a:31). Popular struggles traverse the state from top to bottom (Poulantzas, 1978:141) so that different agencies and actors ‘feel’ social pressures differently (Fox, 1992a:31). In this process, state institutions are pried open revealing previously latent adversaries or allies (Tarrow, 1994). Social forces thus face different access routes in pursuing their interests within the state. Some state actors are inclined to pursue the private capital accumulation interests of the state, while others may value the task of strengthening political legitimacy even more.<sup>34</sup> Yet others “may simply be concerned with career advancement or material gain. But this does not mean that the state actors are completely free to respond as they wish -- they face structural constraints,” as well as institutional limitations. A state actor’s bargaining power within the state “is closely related to the influence of social forces that are pushing in the direction, whether or not they consider themselves allies” (Fox, 1992a:31; see also Poulantzas, 1978:145, 1974).

State actors who are primarily concerned with political legitimacy are the most likely allies of pro-reform forces pushing for land reform, although in some cases, technocratic state elites who may see land reform as a way to develop the capitalist economy may also ally with the peasants. Such state allies, having a great deal of resources and power and locational advantage being within the state can strengthen social mobilization from below and make their impact greater. Concretely, these state allies pose a countervailing force against the state allies of the landlords. These state allies provide additional political and logistical support to the peasants. They also provide security against possible violence of other state actors and/or the landlords against the peasants (Fox, 1996a). But above all, it is these allies that have the decision-making power to go ahead with or withdraw from implementing land reform. In some cases, state reformists and pro-reform social groups exist without making interaction with each other. In such a situation, the political opportunity for reforms is not harnessed. In some other cases, they do interact but instead of supporting each other, they undermine each other. In such a situation, pro-reform forces are generally weakened and prospects for land reform implementation are remote. The most promising way for land reform implementation is when the two streams of pro-reform forces interact, and interact positively, toward the common goal of implementing land reform despite differences in agendas and motivations between them.

*4.3.3. Positive interaction between pro-reform forces within the state and in society.* In most cases, the process of implementing a public policy entails an interaction between state actors and societal actors despite the usual claim of the latter to be independent groups “outside the state.” At this point, two concepts must be clarified: independence and autonomy. Independence

<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Offe and Ronge (1975:140 cited in Held and Krieger, 1983:488) argue that “for its own sake, the state is interested in sustaining accumulation; it has its own institutional self-interest to safeguard the vitality of the capitalist economy from which it derives resources for its own existence.

<sup>34</sup> Some agencies and actors continue to focus on legitimacy issues because of the heritage of past cycles of interaction between the state and mobilized social forces. “But there is a premium on winning the favor of superiors by successfully handling social and political pressures, if possible preempting them before they become articulated demands.” (Fox, 1992a:33)

is largely seen as an absolute “either/or” question, *i.e.* to be either co-opted by or independent from the state. Autonomy is “inherently a matter of degree” and refers here to “the amount of state intervention in the societal actor’s decision-making” (Fox,1992a:28). Independent social movement organizations can only go as far as putting issues onto the state’s agenda, but they are largely unable to directly influence public policy outcomes which necessarily require societal actors’ direct intervention and thus interaction with state actors. Co-opted organizations generally do not make important impact on policy outcomes since they are reduced to the status of administrative adjuncts of the state and thus can hardly go beyond what the state defines as parameters of actions. Autonomous organizations are the most promising type since, while they penetrate the state from top to bottom and thus influence it from within or stretch its possibilities, they can also either pull-out from such interaction when “disengagement” is necessary or that they can preserve themselves when the “windows” of opportunities close while retaining some degree of strength gained from previous interactions with the state which can be utilized for the next “reformist opening” (see Fox,1996a, 1996b).<sup>35</sup>

Compared to policymaking, the implementation phase of land reform has different sites of conflict that require different set of actors and actions. In the Philippines for example, the main site of conflict during the policymaking phase was the national centers of power (different branches of the government) where the national-level state and societal actors are the key players (*e.g.* legislative body, national peasant movements). National-level lobbying, street demonstrations, debates on macro policies and “meta-theories” about reform are some examples of the actions taken during this policymaking period. However, the implementation phase, while requiring the same sites, types of action and actors, necessitates the broadening and deepening of these elements. Concretely, the local communities become a key arena of struggle involving not only national political and economic elites but primarily the local elites.<sup>36</sup> While national peasant movements may not be directly constrained by institutional obstacles to mobilization, elements of the local institutional set-up such as patron-client relationships may play a crucial role in success or failure of land reform during the implementation. Moreover, during the policy debate, independent peasant movements can be very useful in putting the issue into the agenda, but the implementation process that demands a close interface between state and societal actors requires a movement that interacts directly with state actors. If landlords need state allies during the policymaking process, but more so during the implementation, pro-reform societal forces must do no less.

Carving out “institutional access routes” can make the societal pressure felt, but in itself not determine any policy outcome, since “it depends on which actors control the relevant agency” and where these state reformists are positioned within the overall balance of power within the state (Fox,1992a:36). An action of state reformists provokes counteraction from other actors - whether in support of or contrary to these pro-reform initiatives. Thus, this dynamic between and among state actors and institutions continuously alter the political opportunity structure from which social actors can base their collective action and select access routes through which they try to realize their agendas, and also from which the state actors can choose their specific political strategy (Tarrow,1996:40-61).

The contending approaches of state actors in dealing with the twin foundations of state rule, *i.e.* private capital accumulation and political legitimation can be characterized by what Fox (1992a:37) calls “policy currents:” “a coalition between state and social actors that develops strategies to deal with actual or potential challenges to political stability. Linked through institutional access routes, they become political and ideological bridges that span state and

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<sup>35</sup> Scholars refer to this as the “stock of social capital;” see for example Fox (1996a) and (1996b:3-25), and Portilla-Rodriguez (1997).

<sup>36</sup> Refer to Fox (1995:15-19) and Fox and Hernandez (1992:165-208) for Latin American cases.

society.” Policy currents are “forged by shared understandings of the relation between competing demands of capital accumulation and political legitimation, as well as preferred trade-offs between them” (*ibid*).

This “positive interaction” does not necessarily entail explicit coalitions between state and societal actors. Parallel initiatives of the state and societal actors (who may even consider themselves adversaries) into a common goal also form “objective alliances.” In short, each must pressure the other to give in, but they share a broader interest in each other’s gaining strength. The differential motivations of the actions of the state and societal actors are responsible for the inherent potential for conflict in the relations between objectively allied state reformists and societal actors (Fox, 1992a:37).<sup>37</sup>

*4.3.4. Ability to overcome landlords’ resistance to land reform.* Achieving a symbiotic interaction between pro-reform state and societal actors does not necessarily lead to land reform implementation. It has to contend with the countermobilization of the landlords in concert with their state allies. The pro-reform forces are required to surmount the obstacles to reform put up by these anti-reform actors. Where the pro-reform forces fail to muster strength beyond that of the anti-reform current, land reform implementation is unlikely to be carried out. But where the pro-reform forces succeed in surpassing the level of organized resistance by the anti-reform forces, or where the landlords fail to match the pro-reform initiatives spearheaded by pro-reform state and societal actors, then land reform is most likely to be implemented.

The attainment of a positive interaction between state and societal actors supposes that factors to such a coalition have been resolved in a productive way. But factors external to this alliance can be extremely important for the success or failure of the pro-reform initiative. Here again, the issue of political opportunity is of paramount consideration. Tarrow (1994) identifies four important political opportunities, namely, the opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, the availability of influential elites, and cleavage within and among elites. The availability of all or some of these opportunities can create possibilities that even the weak and “disorganized” actors can take advantage; and conversely, even the strong grow weak. Tarrow also demonstrates how, why, when and where opportunities can also be created by social movement and their state allies. Following Tarrow and the concept of political opportunity structure, the pro-reform forces engaged in implementing land reform can overcome the resistance mounted by anti-reform forces when their ranks remain solid and persistent, while the landlords may either fail to muster sufficient state allies, abandoned by state allies, face split from other elites, or simply that their combined force is overpowered by the composite force of the pro-reform actors.

*4.3.5. Summary of the Interactive Approach.* The discussion so far suggests that local peasant mobilizations are a necessary but far from a sufficient condition to push for the implementation of land reform. The inherent structural and institutional constraints, and the usually inaccessible and unaffordable political and logistical needs for sustained and extended collective actions, necessarily confine such mobilization within the narrow boundaries of the community and its immediate proximity; thus they are easily isolated and defeated by their adversaries. Peasants need allies because the landlords normally carry out resistance far beyond

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<sup>37</sup> The discussion here on “symbiotic interaction” between pro-reform state and societal actors is similar to the widely discussed concept of “*concertacion social*” in many parts of Latin America. See for example, Blokland (1995:159-170) where he cites several autonomous peasant organizations like ASOCODE in Central America now engaged in several state-sponsored programs. For a similar but deeper discussion on “*concertacion social*” in Central America, refer to the edited volume by Biekart and Jelsma (1994).

the local level. These allies, which usually are NGOs, national leaderships of peasant organizations, political movements, and the media not only provide the necessary logistical requirements for relatively prolonged mobilizations such as transportation costs and public information materials; they also extend the reach of peasant collective action up to the national centers of power -- helping the peasants identify precise pressure points within the state and society. But such a combined mobilization from below could only go as far as putting the issue onto the agenda of the state if their collective actions are done "outside" the state. In issues like land reform implementation, social mobilization from below must connect with state reformists for greater impact. State reformists are crucial added value to social mobilization in as much as they control some state powers necessary for the implementation of land reform. However, a symbiotic interaction, between the state reformists and societal organizations does not necessarily lead to land reform implementation because they must overcome the mobilization/countermobilization of the landlords who normally forge alliances with state actors. Where the pro-reform forces surpass the level of obstruction mounted by anti-reform forces, or where the landlords fail to match the level of initiative of pro-reform forces, land reform is likely to be implemented.

## 5. Introduction to the Country Case Study

The Philippines is a predominantly agrarian society with a highly skewed landownership distribution. Its agrarian structure and political institutions are more akin to Latin American countries than its Asian neighbors. It has also seen a series of central state initiatives on land reform during this century in response to peasant unrest, the most recent of which is the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Enacted in June 1988, the goal of CARP is to complete re/distribution of targetted areas within ten years.<sup>38</sup> The land re/distribution component of this program may be broadly categorized as less or more contentious, based on the obstacles posed by anti-reform forces. The less contentious components of CARP involve lands where private interests are less pronounced, while the more contentious parts involve landholdings where private interests are quite pronounced. Thus, "less contentious" parts here refer primarily to the distribution of public lands, completion of the reform program in rice and corn lands initiated in 1972 by former President Ferdinand Marcos, and the transfer of those private lands voluntarily offered for reform by landowners. By contrast, CARP's "more contentious" parts involve redistribution of private agricultural lands where the legal owners not only do not cooperate, but are likely to mount serious resistance to the reform. As of December 1996, roughly nine years into implementation of the program, 55 percent or about 4.4 million hectares (mhas.)<sup>39</sup> of the "adjusted target" was reported to have been accomplished.<sup>40</sup> However, only about 100,000 hectares out of the 1,887,300 m.has. of the more contentious private agricultural lands have actually been expropriated by the government and redistributed to peasants. In short, only 2 percent of the total lands re/distributed involved cases where conflicting claims between the politically and economically powerful landlords and subaltern groups of peasants were decided in favor of the latter. With the past achievements concentrated on the less contentious parts of CARP, the remaining 45 percent yet to be implemented mainly involves the more contentious components of the program, that is, private farmlands subject to compulsory acquisition.

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<sup>38</sup> Based on the program's original (1988) target of 10.3 million hectares, the estimated total area that would involve actual land redistribution (as distinct from distribution of public lands) was 3,265,100 million hectares of private lands.

<sup>39</sup> "mhas." will be used in this paper to mean "million hectares."

<sup>40</sup> In the January 1996 meeting of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Committee (PARC), the CARP targets were adjusted from 10.3 million hectares to 8.1, and from 3.9 million peasant households to 3.1. Detailed discussions in Chapter 2. (DAR Report, June 1997).

Most critics of the Philippine agrarian reform program take this nationally aggregated data as “proof” that it is inherently limited. Whether from a more pluralist or more Marxist theoretical tradition, it is widely believed that without prior structural and institutional change, actual redistribution is bound to be blocked by anti-reform forces both within the state and in society. But closer examination of the Philippine agrarian situation shows that there are cases where the program’s more contentious components have been successfully implemented, and land redistributed to peasant communities despite significant landlord resistance, suggesting that the program’s outcomes are not predetermined. These cases have been largely ignored by many CARP critics, both scholars and activists alike, or dismissed as *ad hoc* exceptions. Others simply assume that the key to their success was a “strong” peasant movement, without explaining why some peasant mobilizations lead to repression while others lead to concessions by anti-reform forces. Putzel (1992:363) sweepingly, but precisely, identifies the alliance between the “liberal reform advocates” and the “grass-roots” to successfully implement CARP, but does not elaborate why and how. Still others give credit to the policy elites and managers who implemented the programs to explain these success stories. But while it is difficult to deny the crucial role played by policy elites such account cannot fully explain why these state reformists were successful in some cases but not in all cases.

## 6. Methods

The state-society relations approach is useful in understanding the problematic posed in this paper. To address the gap left out by the widely used dichotomy between society- and state-centered approaches, an “interactive approach” as developed by Fox (1992a) is adopted in this study. This approach will require use of literature in four related areas: land reform, public policy, social movements, and peasant mobilization.

*6.1. Units and levels of analysis.* The key units of analysis of this research are state and societal actors. Societal actors are “groups of people who identify common interests and share ideas about how to pursue their goals; state actors are groups of officials whose actions push or pull in the same political direction” (Fox, 1992a:25-33). Combined, here they include state reformists, anti-reform state actors, landlords, peasant organizations, NGOs, political movements, and the media. They are analyzed at different levels, namely, national-, provincial- and village-level, in order to explore how local/provincial affects national politics and policy and *vice versa*.

*6.2. Operational questions.* To provide the structural and institutional setting, this study first addresses the questions: what is the nature of the land reform program being studied, and in what political-economic structural and institutional setting is it embedded? How has it been implemented so far? The rest of the operational questions revolve around the four factors identified in the hypothesis. First, why and how do local peasant organizations link up with other pro-reform societal actors to form a combined force for social mobilization from below? Second, why and how does social mobilization from below link up with state reformists? Third, why and how do some state actors initiate actions to implement land reform even when they run counter to the interests of the dominant classes in society? Fourth, how is a symbiotic interaction between state reformists and pro-reform societal forces achieved and why is it crucial to successful implementation of land reform? Finally, how can a coalition of pro-reform state and societal actors overcome the landlords’ resistance to land reform where the latter also coalesce with state actors?



6.3. *Specific case studies.* This study has selected five different case studies, namely, *sitio* Poultry (Nueva Ecija), Stanfilco (Davao del Norte), Candaba-San Luis (Pampanga), Maloles (Quezon), and Greenfields (Laguna). These cases, which mainly involve lowland communities in Central and Southern Luzon and Mindanao, cannot claim to be representative of diverse peasant communities in the 7,100 islands of the archipelago in terms of political and socio-economic conditions. Yet, the socio-political processes and institutions, the main interest of this research, present in the case studies are diverse enough to offer rich insights in answering the main question of this research. This study also selects the *Demokratikong/Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (D/KMP, Democratic/Peasant Movement of the Philippines)<sup>41</sup> as a case study for a number of reasons. First, it was in the 1980s the most significant peasant organization (in terms of political influence and mobilizable base) involved in the debate on CARP formulation. Second, it can claim to be representative of other peasant organizations controlled by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) that have played and continue to play an important role in generating societal pressure for agrarian reform. And finally, having been part of this organization from its inception, I have been directly exposed to the internal workings of the organization and have access to unpublished materials which are crucial to the understanding of the character of the peasant movement.

6.4. *Data and Data Collection.* The data here can be broadly classified as primary and secondary. By secondary, is meant here published and unpublished materials - books, journals, conference papers, newspaper accounts, videos, taped interviews conducted by other persons, and government documents. Primary data refer to my personal recollection of events, processes and interfaces, involving both social as well as state actors; personal interviews of key informants; internal documents of peasant organizations, NGOs and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Primary data has been collected over a period of more than ten years as a result of my direct participation in the peasant movement.<sup>42</sup> Thus, personal recollections of events and processes in which I directly and indirectly participated provide the primary data for this study. This, of course is both a strength and limitation. Strength, because it provides first hand accounts of crucial dynamics within and between societal and state actors. Limitation, because I have been a “partisan” actor in these dynamics which may affect the “objectivity” of my perceptions of reality. Likewise, recollection of events may not also be perfectly reliable. To counter these problems, validations were made through personal interviews of other actors and double-checking with written and video recorded materials. In all of the case studies, except one (*i.e.* Stanfilco), I had close interfaces with the different social and state actors involved. Personal interviews were conducted with six informants who have been key players in the case studies. Internal documents of peasant organizations, NGOs and the CPP were gathered from different sources.

6.5. *Scope and Limitation of the Research.* The main limitation of this research is the absence of a field visit. Personal recollections of direct participation in four out of five cases certainly have provided valuable first-hand insights. However, in light of new analytic insights, “new” empirical data are likely to surface if there had been the chance to do a field visit. Other limitations of the study have to be clarified. First, the research focuses only on “land

<sup>41</sup> To save space, whenever a “slash” (/) is used in D/KMP it refers to the two peasant organizations, *i.e.* KMP and DKMP; when there is no “slash,” *i.e.* DKMP, it pertains to DKMP alone.

<sup>42</sup> The period 1983-1996, I held the following positions: Coordinator of Student Organizing Program of the Forum for Rural Concerns, FRC (1983-1985); Secretary General of the Student-Youth League Against Rural Injustice and Tyranny or SOLIDARITY (1986-1987); Deputy Secretary General of PINALAKAS KA! or National Rural Youth Movement (1987-1989), Deputy Secretary General of *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* or KMP (1990-1993), member of the expanded national secretariat of the Congress for a People’s Agrarian Reform or CPAR (1990-1992), national coordinator of the National Coalition of Rice and Corn Peasants or BUTIL (1991-1993), member of the World Coordinating Commission of *La Via Campesina* (1993-1996), and Deputy Secretary General of the *Demokratikong Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* or DKMP (1993-1996).



expropriation” and “land redistribution,” thus, strictly speaking, the paper concerns only to “land reform” and not agrarian reform. The latter involves packages of other reforms like support services, credit and infrastructure which are crucial to the chances of a successful reform in the long-term. Second, because of inaccessibility to documented cases, there are no case studies from three important “sectors”: sugarland, indigenous communities (for ancestral domain), and upland communities which bear important issues in the context of the land question in the Philippines.

## **7. Organization of the Research Paper**

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Chapter 2 will look at the national structural and institutional setting, CARP and its implementation achievements, the peasant movement, and the national level interaction between state reformists and pro-reform societal forces. This chapter will show how the structural and institutional make-up of the country in general, and the countryside more particularly, has influenced the nature of national and rural politics and how they put constraints on effecting radical versions of land reform policy, or on implementing a more or less “liberal type” of land reform. Looking at the recent developments at the international-national levels during the neoliberal period, this chapter will also demonstrate why CARP can, in the current context, be considered a progressive type of land reform. Inquiring into the accomplishments of CARP, this chapter shall show and explain the emergence of state reformists within the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). The chapter then turns to focus on the Democratic/Peasant Movement of the Philippines (D/KMP) to show how it engaged with other societal actors, deemed as peasant allies, in regard to land reform implementation. It will explain why and when the peasant movements changed attitude toward CARP - from “total rejection” to a critical collaboration. Finally, this chapter will show how pro-reform state and societal forces have since 1992 positively interacted with each other in the process of CARP implementation. This chapter provides the national context for the local case studies.

Chapter 3 will provide the local-level perspective to land reform implementation. It will present four local case studies where land reform was successfully implemented despite strong opposition from the landlords. The fifth case is a “partial success story” where the landlord was not expropriated but was forced to give substantial concessions to the peasants. The chapter will examine the cases in the following sequence: *sitio* Poultry, Stanfilco, Candaba-San Luis, Maloles, and Greenfields. A summary based on the structural and institutional setting and the four factors identified in my hypothesis will then be offered to show how these conditions and factors are actually operationalized at the local level. The conclusions from this and the preceding chapter will provide for the identification of lessons and conclusions of this study.

Finally, Chapter 4 will draw out lessons and conclusions from this research with regard to the *bibingka* strategy to land reform implementation. Tracing how the four factors in my hypothesis are operationalized both at the national and local levels, and how these two levels interact to provide positive results, this chapter will discuss theoretical and political implications for the future study of the Philippine state-society relations. It will conclude by generalizing the lessons from the Philippines that are relevant to countries in fourth (“avoidance”) and fifth (“modest advance”) currents where effort to land reform policymaking and implementation, respectively, face formidable obstacles within the context of rapidly changing global and national settings where the neoliberal forces against redistributive land reforms.



## CHAPTER 2

### LAND REFORM IMPERATIVES AND INITIATIVES: A NATIONAL-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter provides a national-level perspective of land reform implementation in the Philippines. It will look into the structural and institutional context of land reform, CARP and its accomplishments, the peasant movement, and the national-level interaction of pro-reform state and societal actors. The analysis of the overall structural and institutional setting will show how these factors influence land reform policy choices and outcomes. The discussion on the CARP's salient features highlights the program's provisions that are most relevant to the success or failure of the policy during the implementation phase, while the section on CARP implementation demonstrates the extent to which the program has been carried out both in public and private lands. The discussion on the peasant movement will show how organized peasants mobilized during the implementation phase of CARP, as it will also address the question of peasants' external allies and the terms of relationship of this alliance. The last section will show how the symbiotic interaction between pro-reform state and societal actors works at the national level.

#### 2. Structural and Institutional Context

The Philippines remains an agrarian society with 65 percent of its population living and working in rural areas. Agriculture continues to be economically important contributing 27 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorbing 43 percent of total active labor force in 1994. In addition, roughly one-third of labor employed in the service sector was in the agro-industrial category which accounted for GDP's 14 percent, making agriculture the country's main employer with around 60 percent, and in effect, 40 percent of GDP in 1994.<sup>1</sup> Over the past decades, agriculture posted modest growth rates, averaging three percent per year between 1960 and 1996.<sup>2</sup> Still viewing agriculture in its "historic role" as provider of "surplus factors of production" for industrial development, the government aims to reduce the sector's GDP contribution to 19 percent by 1998, in an apparent hope that this decrease would translate into an increase in the industrial sector's share to GDP (CPDS, 1996). But while agriculture continues to be important in financing "the industrial project of the elite in the neoliberal era," two other key sources have emerged over time, namely, foreign-direct investments and remittances from overseas Filipinos, with encouragement from the Philippine national government.<sup>3</sup> The imperatives of capital accumulation encouraged successive post-Marcos governments to actively participate in the neoliberal global economic ballgame, and so the current Philippine government's hopes for industrial development are thus anchored on the three main pillars of its national economy: foreign-direct investments, foreign exchange remittances of overseas Filipinos, and the "high value" foreign exchange-earning sectors of agriculture.

This three-pronged development strategy has coincided with (if not directly spurred) the impressive macro-economic growth rates that the country has seen since the early 1990s, including an almost seven percent growth rate in 1996. This fast-track development initiative is

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<sup>1</sup> Industry accounted for 32 percent absorbing 15 percent of labor force; the service sector had 42 percent employing 40 percent of labor force.

<sup>2</sup> Data were taken from *Farm News and Views* (January-February 1997, January-April, 1993); own calculations with data from the International Historical Statistics (1975, 1990) and the United Nations Statistical Yearbook (1982, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> In 1996, the foreign-direct investments that came into the country were estimated to be around \$5 billion, while the total foreign exchange remittances of overseas Filipinos (now estimated at 4.5 million) was about \$6 billion (*Farm News and Views*, January-February, 1997).

spelled out in two major interrelated development plans that were laid down by the current government of Fidel Ramos, when he came to power in 1992. First, the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) is considered the overarching strategy framework that will enable the country to “pole-vault” economically into the next century. Despite its claim of comprehensiveness and multisectoral balance, actual economic growth under the MTPDP during its first four years was spurred mainly by what Bello (1997) calls a flood of “highly speculative investments” in the construction and real estate sectors, which became overheated due to over-investment, leading to the country’s current fiscal crisis. This crisis is now threatening whatever modest achievements the Philippine economy had gained.<sup>4</sup> Second, the MTPDP’s rural blueprint, the Medium-Term Agricultural Development Plan (MTADP) focuses on how the agricultural sector can fully harness its potential as one of the vital cogs in the country’s economic wheel. Its strategy to modernize agriculture is marked by a deliberate effort to withdraw state support for high volume, low value crops, while aggressively promoting low volume, high value sectors.<sup>5</sup> Both plans, integrated into the IMF-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and rules set by the World Trade Organization (WTO), have had a profound impact on the country’s rural socio-economic and political make-up.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, in addition to these two policies which rally the country toward capital accumulation, the Ramos administration also launched an anti-poverty program called the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) in 1993, aimed at providing a cushion against the negative impact of structural reforms on the poorest of the poor, meaning, the rural poor.<sup>7</sup> The SRA can be viewed as an attempt to shore up the government’s political legitimacy, which is threatened by erosion as a result of its capital accumulation drive.

Philippine agriculture is diverse in terms of products and production systems but can be broadly differentiated into two types. The traditional sector (rice, corn, coconut, sugarcane and abaca) which is marked by obsolete production and exchange relations (*i.e.* tenancy and leasehold), but continues to be the dominant sector in terms of nationally-aggregated monetary value and land-use (not less than 90 per cent of total farmland). Characterized by high volume, low value crops and antiquated production technology, the traditional sector is dominated by traditional landed elites whose provenance dates back to colonial times.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the non-traditional sector produces low volume, high value crops and products such as banana, pineapple, mango, prawns, livestock and commercial trees, and has seen rapid expansion since the neoliberal resurgence. Marked by production and exchange relations different from the traditional sector, *e.g.* contract growing scheme and wage relations, the non-traditional sector is where non-traditional landed elites, including urban-based entrepreneurs and multinational corporations, have gained the most ground in recent years.<sup>9</sup> Modern technology and equipment, as well as a capitalist management system also characterize these modern farm enclaves, which fulfill the imperatives of vertical integration in production, processing and marketing -- a trend ushered in by the ongoing profound restructuring of the global agro-food system that began in the 1970s (see Goodman and Watts, 1994). But this traditional-modern dichotomy is not static and the line between the two

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of the Philippine macro-economic strategy *vis-a-vis* southeast Asian emerging “tigers,” see Bello (1996).

<sup>5</sup> Earlier versions of the MTADP vowed to reduce the hectareage devoted to rice and corn from 6.3 to 2 million hectares that will be carried out from 1993-1998. The lands to be released from these low-value crops will then be re-allocated to livestock, poultry, and non-traditional export crops. To date, there is no empirical data to show how far the government was able to carry out this plan; see CPDS (1996) and *Farm News and Views* (January-February 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Refer to a recently published edited volume on GATT and its implications on Philippines agriculture (Reyes [ed.], 1996), especially the articles of Lim (pp.29-86) on the three traditional crops, and Ofroneo (117-140) on the non-traditional crops.

<sup>7</sup> SRA is a targeted social policy amidst the neoliberal imperative to down-size the Philippine state. It is also a calculated political move on the part of the government *vis-a-vis* possible resurgence of massive rural dissent.

<sup>8</sup> For a study of the rice sector, refer to Alarde-Regalado and Hallare-Lara (1992), Hallare-Lara (1992) for the corn sector; and Watkins (1996) for the corn sector in light of GATT. Although the Green Revolution impacted profoundly in rice farming, it failed to push for a technological level that would be competitive during the current global neoliberal situation - refer to Feder (1983).

<sup>9</sup> Refer to Ofroneo (1987) and his most recent work (1996) on the subject in the context of GATT.

broad types of farming system is in reality quite blurred. Many traditional farms that are in transition toward modernization, or moving toward being integrated into modern farms exhibit features of both types.<sup>10</sup> More generally, the current rural capital accumulation process being steered by both the old and new types of landlords is set against the background of a persistently extreme inequitable distribution of economic and political resources in the countryside.<sup>11</sup>

The structural make-up of the country's economy, particularly its skewed landownership distribution, have had a profound impact on the structure of power relations and political institutions.<sup>12</sup> Rural politics is dominated by local political bosses (*caciques*) who lord over the countryside through a complex network of patronage, *i.e.* usually as patrons of local peasant communities at the same time as clients of patrons at levels beyond their own local domain.<sup>13</sup> The rise in economic significance of the non-traditional exports crops sector has entailed a surge in the political influence of landlord-entrepreneurs, partially undermining the historical political influence of traditional landlords. This process is best illustrated on the one hand by the erosion of the political clout of landlords in rice and corn lands, and on the other hand by the powerful anti-reform lobby demonstrated by commercial farm owners during the CARP policymaking period. Concretely, during the CARP policy debate, the maximum concession that the rice and corn landlords received was an adjustment of the compensation package for their lands. By contrast, owners of commercial farms were able to force through exemptions and deferments for their farms (Riedinger, 1995). This is widely believed to be predicated on the fact that the former is a low-value, non-dollar earning sector, while the latter is high-value, dollar-earning type that is crucial in a national economy highly dependent on foreign exchange partly in order to pay off its external debt.<sup>14</sup>

Combined, these two broad types of landlords are quite entrenched within the Philippine state. In the first post-Marcos legislative body, 168 out of the total elected 199 members of the Congress were landlords themselves or closely tied to big landowning families (Gutierrez, 1992). Splits among landlords based on political affiliation was used to disenfranchise some landlords of their political and economic privilege under Marcos. However, the strong anti-authoritarian sentiment since 1986 provided more space for more landlords regardless of political affiliation to take part in the elite's development project. This "space" became even more protected and enlarged under Aquino to prevent some sections of the elite from supporting the military putschists that persistently tried to overthrow her administration through several *coup d'etat* attempts, and under Ramos in his effort to broaden his political legitimacy after garnering a meager 23 percent electoral mandate in 1992. In short, a confluence of events ensured the continued "political pluralism" of the Philippine elite, that included different types of landlords.

Against this political background, past cycles of violent peasant-based upheavals in the Philippines have been only able to gain intermittent concessions from a state dominated historically by anti-reform elites. The elite response to peasant unrest has traditionally been a

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<sup>10</sup> For example, a farm can still be in highly skewed sharecropping system but are already beginning to produce low volume, high value crops. For a study of the overlapping class interests of various types of elites in the Philippines, see Budd (1994).

<sup>11</sup> Based on government land registration records in 1988, not more than 5 per cent of all landowners own 83 per cent of the country's total farmland, while the number of landless/near-landless peasants was around 3.9 million households. The Gini coefficient in land redistribution in 1988 was 0.647 (Putzel, 1992) and for income distribution in the country was 0.50 (World Bank, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> There is a distinct tradition of scholarly research along this analysis of structures *vis-a-vis* political institutions that follows the classic work of Barrington Moore, Jr. (1965). For a recent work testing Moore's thesis on Latin America (Moore focused his research on developed countries, including India), see Huber (1995).

<sup>13</sup> See Anderson (1988) for an interesting historical analyses about the emergence of *caciques* in the country; also refer to Lacaba (ed.) (1995) for a collection of studies on local political bosses in contemporary Philippines.

<sup>14</sup> For an elaborated study on this subject, refer to Koppel (1990).

combination of repression, resettlement, and limited reform. There were several dozens of such attempts.<sup>15</sup> Among the most significant was the 1950s CIA-conceived land reform which focused primarily on land resettlement aimed at undermining the communist-led *Huk* rebellion (Starner, 1961). Another, the Marcos land reform (Presidential Decree No. 27) in 1972, targeted close to a million hectares of tenanted rice and corn lands for redistribution, but again was mainly directed against Marcos's political enemies and the nascent communist insurgency. After 15 years of implementation, the Marcos government was able to redistribute not more than 10 percent of its target. But none of the past tenancy and land reform programs significantly addressed the underlying causes of peasant unrest, especially widespread landlessness and near-landlessness, and so peasant unrest remained an important part of the rural political terrain throughout most of this century.

The most important recent postwar peasant-based revolution is the communist insurgency led by the (Maoist) Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) together with its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). Many of the contemporary peasant organizations which emerged during and after the Marcos dictatorship were created and controlled by the CPP-NPA. The 1980s, however, witnessed the proliferation of other progressive people's organizations, NGOs, and political movements with an important rural presence, eroding the hegemony previously enjoyed by the CPP and filling in the wider space of middle-range rural politics previously neglected due to the extremely polarized choices for the peasants between full-scale armed revolution on the one hand and "everyday resistance" on the other. The plurality of societal actors that emerged and developed during this period has had a profound influence on the subsequent social movement make-up in the post-Marcos period and on how the Philippine state relates with the broad civil society, strategically altering the political opportunity structures for state and societal actors, and the choices of the former's repertoire of collective action (Rocamora, 1994b; Francisco, 1993).

The transition from authoritarian to a national electoral regime in 1986 did not lead to complete democratization of the countryside, since entrenched political elites continue to dominate the rural polity today. But in recent years there has been a partial erosion of these authoritarian rural enclaves, in a political process which can be traced back to the series of highly constrained elections held during and immediately after the period of authoritarian rule (Franco, 1997). The immediate post-Marcos period opened new political opportunities for democratization, and specifically rural democratization, which led to a heated policy debate on agrarian reform. After initially foot-dragging on the issue, the Aquino administration was eventually forced to act after thirteen peasants were gunned down by government troops at the foot of Mendiola Bridge near Malacanang (presidential palace). Subsequent actions by the government eventually led to the promulgation of Executive Order No. 229 in June 1987 which called for the landlord-dominated Congress to enact an agrarian reform law. The final law was CARP.

### **3. Salient Features of CARP**

The basic principles in any agrarian reform policy are the same controversial issues raised during the tedious process of policymaking. These are the issues of coverage, retention limit, schedule and priorities, beneficiaries, exclusion-exemption and deferment, as well as the

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<sup>15</sup> For a summary of these tenancy and land reforms, see IBON (1988).

administrative and financial requirements of the program. Often these issues become more contentious during the implementation phase of the reform.<sup>16</sup>

The CARP's coverage is the most controversial issue because, while in principle it seeks to reform all of the country's 10.3 million hectares (mhas.) of farmland in favor of some 3.9 million direct peasant-household beneficiaries, many of the program's exemptions directly run counter to this aim. For example, the retention limit was set at 5 hectares plus 3 hectares for each qualified child of the landlord, which many analysts claim would effectively exclude from reform a substantial portion of private lands. "Qualified child" means that he/she must at least be 15 years old as of 15 June 1988 and directly involved in tilling or "managing" the farm in question.

The program's schedule and priorities of implementation delay the more contentious private agricultural lands until the later phase of implementation. The program is divided into three phases. Phase 1 (1988-1992), which covers around 1.45 million hectares, was to be devoted to: the completion of the Marcos land reform; the reform of idle and abandoned lands, and lands voluntarily offered for sale by their owners; and the reform of estates foreclosed by government financial institutions and those acquired by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), the government body tasked to recover the so-called "ill-gotten wealth" of Marcos and his "cronies."<sup>17</sup> Phase 2 (1988-1992), which covers about 7.4 mhas., was to be devoted to reforming all public agricultural lands to be opened for new development and resettlement, as well as private lands of areas 50 hectares and above.<sup>18</sup> Phase 3 is divided into two sub-phases and has a combined coverage of 1.35 million hectares. Phase 3-A (1992-1995) was supposed to cover private agricultural lands of 24 to 50 hectares, while Phase 3-B (1994-1998) is supposed to cover private farmlands of areas above the retention limit up to 24 hectares.<sup>19</sup> This delay in subjecting contentious private lands to the program has raised valid fears among many observers that it will only give ample time for landlords to evade the reform and to initiate legislative measures to further emasculate the law.

The program offers different modes of land acquisition and re/distribution. For public lands, which comprise more than half of the target land for reform, distribution is through either Free Patents for Alienable and Disposable (A&D) lands, Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) for resettlement sites, and stewardship contracts for public lands covered by the Integrated Social Forestry Program (ISFP). For private lands, although there are other modes of land acquisition, compulsory acquisition (CA) is the main mode to be used in expropriating private lands whose owners did not voluntarily offer their lands for land reform. A CLOA is awarded to peasant beneficiaries, who become "amortizing owners."

Another key controversy over CARP is its upholding of the principles of "just compensation" to expropriated landlords, which according to observers, is likely to render the program quite expensive, as shown in other experiences elsewhere, while also providing additional legal opportunities for landlords to contest expropriation. The CARP was originally conceived to need around P221 billion (roughly \$10 billion). This total funding covers both the

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<sup>16</sup> Aside from Putzel (especially 1988 and 1992), Hayami, et al (1990), and Riedinger (1995), refer to Kasuya (1995) and Reyes (1997) for critical analysis of CARP policymaking and initial implementation.

<sup>17</sup> 727,800 has. for the Marcos land reform; 650,000 has. for idle and abandoned lands; and 77,000 has. for the PCCG-acquired lands.

<sup>18</sup> 6.9 mhas. for public lands and 0.535 mhas. for private lands with 50 has. and above.

<sup>19</sup> Phase I covers 1.05 mhas. and Phase II covers 0.3 mhas.

land acquisition cost and the package of support infrastructure, both physical and social. Some P80 billion of this was allotted for landlord compensation.<sup>20</sup>

The CARP defers land redistribution of commercial farms defined as private lands over five hectares devoted to livestock, poultry, aquaculture including saltbeds, fishponds and prawn farms fruit farms, orchards, vegetable and cut-flower farms, and cacao, coffee and rubber plantations. These will be subject to expropriation only after ten years from 15 June 1988. Most critics argue that this denies the peasants their right to immediately own the land, renders future reform in this sector uncertain, and constitutes another highway by which landlords can try to drive away from redistributive reform simply by declaring estates as “commercial farms,” or by converting farms into “commercial” types. Relatedly, another loophole in CARP is the provision on corporate farms which declares them exempted from land redistribution if the corporate owners opt for stock-sharing option. The CARP declares that land-owning corporations may give their qualified beneficiaries the right to purchase a proportion of its capital stock that the agricultural land bears in relation to the company’s total assets. It is widely believed that this option encourages corporations to undervalue their land asset, while overvaluing non-land asset.

Finally, in another provision, CARP prohibits “[t]he forcible entry or illegal detainer (*sic*) by persons who are not qualified beneficiaries under [CARP] to avail themselves of the rights and benefits of the Agrarian Reform Program.” This is perceived by many analysts to be directed against militant peasant movements, like KMP, that have launched nationwide campaign to invade lands.<sup>21</sup>

The administrative task of carrying out CARP implementation rests with three major governmental departments, namely, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP). The DAR, the lead agency in the program’s implementation, is specifically tasked to implement the program in private landholdings, while the DENR is tasked with the distribution of public lands. The LBP is in charge of landlord compensation and beneficiaries’ amortization. There are many other smaller government bureaus involved in the implementation for tasks such as land survey and titling.<sup>22</sup> The DAR was also given quasi-judicial powers in deciding on the agrarian disputes that may arise in the course of CARP implementation. Within the DAR, the most important implementing bodies with different structures and functions are the Municipal Agrarian Reform Office/r (MARO), Provincial Agrarian Reform Office/r (PARO), DAR Adjudication Board (DARAB), and Provincial Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board (PARAD). The MARO and PARO are the DAR implementing arms in the municipal and provincial levels. Most of the preliminary decisions about CARP implementation pass through these bodies. The DARAB has primary jurisdiction to determine and adjudicate all agrarian disputes involving the implementation of CARP; PARAD is its provincial arm. Overall, DAR has an estimated nationwide personnel of 15,000. At the village-level, the Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee (BARC) composed of

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<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the additional opportunities for landlord resistance which the “just compensation” clause creates derive from the fact that CARP lists ten factors to be considered in determining what constitutes “just compensation. The DAR counterbalances this by stating that land redistribution can proceed despite pending protest by the landlord. The CARP states that while a landlord is contesting the valuation of the land or is not responding to the government’s offer, the government may proceed to distribute the property upon deposit in a trust account of the initial value offered. The mode of compensation under CARP is via a combined cash and government bonds. The agrarian reform beneficiaries also do not have to pay the actual cost of the land acquired by the state from the landlord, although many critics say that the potential amount that the beneficiaries are required to pay is nonetheless far beyond their capacity. See Putzel (1992:346-349), Reyes (1997) for recent analysis.

<sup>21</sup> But see Prosterman and Handstad (1988) for interesting insights on how peasant movements can go around this provision.

<sup>22</sup> See Hirtz (1997) for an interesting account about the herculean administrative task of CARP implementation.



peasant representatives, NGOs, government officials and affected landlords, assists DAR in the implementation.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. CARP Implementation Accomplishments

By the end of December 1996, nine years into its implementation, CARP had accomplished about 55 percent of its adjusted target, *i.e.* about 4.4 million hectares. But the amount of private agricultural land subjected to compulsory acquisition totalled only 101,165 hectares, which means that so far the program's implementation has focused mainly on public lands and other less contentious components. CARP implementation can be divided into two periods, the "scandalous first four years" and the "period of relative stability and modest successes."

*4.1. The 'scandalous' first four years (1988-June 1992).* The first four years of CARP implementation under the Aquino administration were marked by public scandals involving anomalous real estate deals, widespread land reform evasions by landlords, several changes in DAR leadership, non-participation of major peasant organizations in program implementation, as well as a steady stream of landlord-sponsored legislative initiatives intended to further dilute CARP. Within this overall unfavorable political climate for land reform, program implementation was extremely slow, resulting in almost zero implementation in private landholdings under compulsory acquisition.<sup>24</sup>

Many real estate speculators exploited the program's provisions on voluntarily-offered lands. Many, in direct collusion with corrupt DAR officials sold marginal lands to the government at sky-high prices. The discovery of such widespread fraud during the late 1980s caused a public scandal, leading to the fall of several top DAR officials including the first DAR secretary under CARP, Philip Juico (1987-1989). Unwilling to provoke either the landlords, Juico did not subject any private estate to compulsory acquisition focusing instead on public lands, as well as voluntary transfers of private lands, encouraging real estate speculations during this time. While tolerating a handful of "liberal reform advocates" within the DAR bureaucracy, Juico headed a department then dominated by supporters of "conservative reform," an office known to be plagued by widespread rent-seeking and inefficiency.

A former judge and chief of the immigration commission, Miriam Defensor-Santiago (June-December 1989), was hand-picked to replace Juico. Like her predecessor, Santiago had no experience with land reform. However, by that time, she had gained a reputation for being an effective and committed "graft-buster," and was considered the most popular national official in Aquino's administration. The Aquino administration badly needed a person like Santiago to restore the public's trust and confidence in the agency. The DAR's most important achievement under Santiago was to clinch a formal agreement with the Department of National Defense for the latter to help DAR in taking back lands "illegally occupied by peasants or distributed by the New People's Army." She would also later claim that the "DAR had been infiltrated at the highest levels by communists," referring to the liberal reform advocates. (Putzel, 1992:321). While it

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<sup>23</sup> Theoretically and in terms of peasant representation, BARC is comparable to the local committees set up to implement land reform programs in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. For an interesting comparative study of this subject, refer to Ledesma (1991). There are other extended committees formed to assist the DAR and DENR in CARP implementation. The Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC), chaired by the President of the Philippines, is the highest coordinating body which also includes representatives from other concerned sectors (e.g. peasants and landlords). The PARC concept and structure is also institutionalized on the provincial level through the Provincial Agrarian Reform Coordinating Committee (PARCCOM).

<sup>24</sup> Ex-DAR Secretary Florencio Abad (1991) said that after three years of CARP not a single hectare of private land was expropriated.

appeared that Santiago was the type of DAR secretary that landlords might have wanted, her well-known ambition in “big politics” dragged her into trouble with political leaders within the Congress who were already worried about the media popularity of Santiago. The imperatives of party politics within the Congress prevailed - Santiago was not confirmed secretary.<sup>25</sup>

When President Aquino appointed Florencio Abad (January-April 1990), a social-democrat and member of the House of Representatives, as new DAR secretary, the move was interpreted by many observers as an effort to win back the confidence of the progressive section of the peasantry and to restore public and media confidence in the CARP. A liberal reform advocate, Abad had authored a progressive land reform bill in 1987 that called for a zero retention limit. His bill was defeated, and he later voted against the final law that was approved, *i.e.* CARP. Vowing to stretch the limits of the law to favor the peasants, Abad accepted the challenge of implementing a law which he had voted against, banking on collaboration with autonomous peasant organizations to succeed. But he was immediately confronted with a difficult and controversial case where the Department of Trade and Industry wanted to convert a 230-hectare government-owned land in Cavite (an hour-drive south of Manila). Abad sided with the peasants, but the pro-conversion forces within and outside the state overpowered this pro-reform alliance. In retaliation for his position in the Cavite case, Abad was summarily refused confirmation as DAR secretary the Congress despite unanimous support by peasant organizations across the political spectrum. Abad resigned in April 1990 after serving only five months in office.<sup>26</sup>

The last DAR secretary during the Aquino administration was Benjamin Leong (mid-1990-June 1992), a senior under-secretary and representative of the conservative reform bloc in the department. Described as “neither pro-peasant nor anti-landlord,” his appointment was quickly confirmed. In the meantime, many of the liberal reformists within DAR had already resigned after the Abad controversy, leaving the bureaucracy in the hands of conservative officials and ensuring the department’s uncontented focus on the less contentious component of CARP in conjunction with peasant groups that have been traditionally co-opted by the state. (Putzel, 1992:326-327)

From 1988 to 1992, several issues demonstrating or contributing to the further weakening of the law dominated the reform implementation landscape. First, the stock-distribution scheme adopted at *Hacienda Luisita*, the 6,200-hectare sugarcane plantation owned by the family of Corazon Aquino, became a model for other landlords seeking to keep corporate farms intact and retain control of them (SENTRA, 1991). Second, the provision on government-owned lands leased to multinational corporations (MNCs) proved to be even better business for MNCs than perhaps initially thought, while bringing very little improvement to the lives of the farmworkers under the new emerging “reformed” alternative of growership contracts. Third, the problems that plagued CARP during these early years contributed to dampening foreign funders’ interest in the program, which the government had earlier hoped would take the lead in financing the program. From 1988 to 1992, barely \$1 billion was raised through government as well as foreign assistance funding. Ironically, during this period, the problem was not the smaller than expected funds, but that the DAR was not even able to spend the total funds, limited as they were. (Putzel, 1992:348). Finally, since 1988, numerous pieces of legislation were initiated in Congress, as well as the executive and judicial branches of government aimed primarily at exempting more lands from CARP coverage. Some of these bills were eventually enacted into law, although many are still

<sup>25</sup> Cabinet members appointed by the President have to be confirmed by the Philippine Congress’ Commission on Appointments.

<sup>26</sup> The first half of 1990 was a tumultuous period for CARP. A month after Abad resigned as secretary, Jaime Tadeo, the country’s most popular peasant leader and chairperson of KMP was arrested and jailed based on an old case widely believed to have been concocted by Marcos after Tadeo led the first major peasant demonstration in open defiance of the dictatorship. He was to spend more than three years in prison.

pending in Congress. Several major executive decisions also further weakened the program (Ochoa,1997).<sup>27</sup>

Seriously hobbled by these unfavorable developments, it would take the fresh, activist leadership of Ernesto Garilao under the Ramos administration to give life to the program's remaining implementation capabilities.

*4.2. Period of relative stability and modest successes (June 1992-June 1997).* The 1992 electoral victory of Fidel Ramos, a former top military general during the Marcos dictatorship and defense minister in the Aquino administration, elicited grim predictions about the fate of the already much-weakened CARP. Initial predictions about the imminent demise of CARP were framed within the broader projection that Ramos would be a "military general-president," and that a return to authoritarian regime was likewise imminent. Indeed, one of the planks in Ramos' campaign platform had been to increase the retention limit under CARP from 5 to 50 hectares, and soon after being sworn into office, the new president started to recruit military officers into his administration. But it did not take very long for either of these predictions to be proven incorrect.

When Ramos took office in June 1992, he immediately appointed a new DAR secretary, Ernesto Garilao. Garilao had previously been the head of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), one of the country's biggest mainstream NGOs funded by the country's top corporations and other foreign donors. He was loosely identified with the conservative wing of the social-democrats. The first crucial move made by Garilao during his first few days in office was to convince Ramos to drop his campaign promise of a 50 hectare retention limit. In addition, he brought several respected NGO activists into the DAR and gave them key positions in the bureaucracy, and then proceeded to launch a "clean up" operation inside the bureaucracy. The other major step taken by the new secretary was to immediately seek informal consultations with members of the NGO community, to the surprise of many of them. He later instituted both formal and informal consultative groups involving various autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs. Taken together, these moves suggested that he would be more concerned with ensuring the political legitimacy, rather than capital accumulation of the Philippine state.

Cognizant of CARP's loopholes and ongoing landlord opposition, the secretary largely followed the main focus of his predecessors, *i.e.* implementing its less contentious components. The main difference he made could be seen in the relatively swift implementation of these components from 1992-1996, such that the achievements of the two previous administrations were surpassed in a much shorter period of time. By the end of December 1996, after four years in office, under the new leadership, the DAR was able to re/distribute a total of 2.36 mhas. of lands, surpassing the twenty-year accumulated accomplishments of its predecessors (DAR,1997b:8).<sup>28</sup> In total, as of December 1996, out of the targetted 8.061 mhas., CARP was able to re/distribute 4.464 mhas. of land (or 55 percent of the target), posting a balance of 3.623 mhas. (DAR,1997b:8). A deeper look into the actual "working scope" of CARP during this time, and a breakdown of data and types of lands covered is needed to more fully understand the significance of this nationally aggregated report, since it was also under the new leadership where the more contentious components of CARP were started to be covered.

<sup>27</sup> Examples are: the Department of Justice (DOJ) Opinion No. 44 signed in 1990 which exempted all lands already reclassified as non-agricultural lands before 15 June 1988; Section 22 of the Local Government Code which gave town councils the power to reclassify lands into non-agricultural uses; and the Supreme Court decision (1990) exempting lands devoted to poultry, swine, or livestock; while fishponds were excluded in 1995.

<sup>28</sup> The Marcos administration redistributed 70,000 hectares while Aquino had 1.85 mhas (DAR,1997:8).

The working scope used in the July 1997 progress report of DAR was 8.061 mhas. of land, no longer the original 10.3 mhas. used in 1988. This represents a one-fifth reduction in target areas and beneficiaries. The revision increased the scope of lands covered by DAR by 13 percent while the share of the DENR was cut decreased by almost half.<sup>29</sup> However, the increased portion of public lands accounted for the DAR's bigger share while private lands slated for compulsory acquisition actually decreased by 20.23 percent.<sup>30</sup> The big chunk sliced from the DENR target in public lands was left unexplained by the government, although there is widespread speculation that these lands were most likely allocated for priority non-traditional programs under MTADP like cattle ranching. The reason for the significant reduction in the category of 24-50 has is also not clear, but might have been due to the additional exclusions that were instituted during the implementation of CARP such as in poultry, livestock and fishponds areas.<sup>31</sup> The remaining balance of the program is 1.869 mhas. for public lands, and 1.543 mhas. for private lands. For private lands scheduled for compulsory acquisition, meaning, the more contentious components, the standing balance is 1.404 mhas.<sup>32</sup>

As expected, landlords continued to mount serious resistance to land reform implementation in private estates, though the number of legal cases filed over "just compensation" did not increase significantly as earlier predicted. For example, in 1996, a little less than ten percent of the new cases involved "just compensation" claims, while the rest were of different varieties.<sup>33</sup> After private lands began to be covered in 1992, the number of legal cases swelled, but the DAR has done a better job of keeping pace with this caseload than previously, with a case resolution rating of 73 percent in 1996.<sup>34</sup>

The position of the DAR since 1992 has been different from the first four years of CARP implementation in several ways. First, the current DAR secretary clearly has a more "two-way" relationship with the executive branch of the government, especially the Office of the President. Garilao has been able to "stabilize" the agrarian front, and in doing so he earned the government's confidence in him as demonstrated by his appointment as head of the government's anti-poverty program. Such an appointment has put role of DAR and Garilao within a broader anti-poverty framework, strengthening the pro-(land)reform policy current within the government. Evidence of Garilao's increasing political clout within the government is that he is the only remaining member of the originally constituted 1992 Cabinet. Relatedly, the new DAR secretary has demonstrated his ability and willingness at times to challenge anti-(land)reform policy currents within the Ramos administration. Initially paired with a Department of Agriculture (DA) secretary who was outrightly anti-land reform, Garilao has, most of the time, shown that he could stand such inter-agency conflicting priorities and push their outcomes in his favor, even though at times when the "private accumulation" imperatives for the government were too great, the legitimacy task was set aside.<sup>35</sup> Finally, through Garilao's efforts, liberal land reform advocates have become

<sup>29</sup> The January 1997 adjustment increased DAR's scope from 3.8 to 4.3 mhas., although the increase came from additional public lands cut from DENR. DENR's share was cut from 6.5 to 3.8 mhas. (DAR,1997a).

<sup>30</sup> The complete breakdown of the revised figure is the following: in 1988, above 50 hectares was 534,400 has.; 24-50 has. was 1,049,800 has.; and below 24 has. was 303,100 has.; and in 1997, these were revised further downward to 456,588 has.; 736,420 has.; and 312,355 has., respectively. The less contentious private lands were also reduced as follows: 727,000 has. to 579,520 has. for rice and corn lands; and from 400,000 to 396,684 has. for voluntarily offered lands. The grand total of these figures was a reduction from 3.015 mhas. in 1988 to 2.481 mhas. in 1997 (DAR,1997b).

<sup>31</sup> Refer to the analysis of the Philippine Peasant Institute (*Farm News and Views*,1997)

<sup>32</sup> The breakdown is as follows: 381,901 has. for above 50 has.; 306,104 has. for 24-50 has.; and 715,937 for below 24 has. (DAR,1997b).

<sup>33</sup> 2,270 out of 34,784 new cases (*ibid*).

<sup>34</sup> From 1988 to 1991, only a total of 5,838 cases were resolved, but from 1992 to December 1996, 82,577 cases were resolved (unfortunately, there is no data available on the overall number of cases filed) (DAR,1997b).

<sup>35</sup> This was exactly what happened when the DAR secretary signed the crop conversion and CARP exclusion orders for the 300,000 hectares of "CARPable" lands in Mindanao to give way for the investment of a Malaysian corporation on palm oil plantation. Such as deal was personally

entrenched within the DAR. Nationally, it is estimated that about 25 percent of the DAR employees are actively pro-reform.<sup>36</sup>

However, pro-reform social mobilizations from below have also played a very important role in strengthening the position of pro-reform forces within the government. Indeed, the importance of social mobilization from below has been recognized by Garilao himself, as shown by his choice of working with autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs rather than against them - an act that constituted opening of political opportunity for societal actors that would eventually partly transform them.

## 5. The Peasant Movement

*5.1. The rise and fall of the CPP and KMP.* From the 1970s through the 1980s, the political landscape of the Philippines was marked by the phenomenal growth of a peasant-based insurgency led by the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). Because the repression and militarization at the height of the Marcos authoritarian regime initially permitted only armed and clandestine forms of struggle, the CPP developed a virtual hegemony in the opposition movement against Marcos. This CPP-led movement became known as the National-Democratic Movement, or more popularly "Nat-Dem" or "ND," because of its vision of a two-stage revolution, *i.e.* aspiring first to achieve "national democracy" by overthrowing imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism, before entering into the second stage, the socialist revolution. In this framework, the principal form of struggle is armed, patterned after the Maoist dictum of "wave by wave, surround the cities from the countryside." The ND movement subordinated all other forms of struggle to the principal armed form. Finally, it identifies the "proletariats" as the "leading force," while the peasantry is considered the "main force." The following excerpts from the CPP founding chairperson, Amado Guerrero (1970) helps to contextualize the discussion below about the peasant movement.

Feudalism and semi-feudalism oppress and exploit the poor peasants, the farm workers, and the lower-middle peasants. Without focusing attention on this problem and providing it with a solution, we cannot draw into the ranks of the revolution the most formidable force that can overwhelm the enemy.

Agrarian revolution is the solution. The peasant masses are aroused and mobilized to overthrow landlord authority and carry out land reform step by step. Depending on concrete circumstances... rent reduction and elimination of usury or outright confiscation of landlord property may be effected.

Only by carrying out agrarian revolution can the revolutionary leadership activate the peasant masses as the main force of the revolution and realize the basic alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry. From the ranks of the downtrodden peasantry can then be drawn the greatest number of armed contingents.

In opposing and overthrowing the landlords, we hold as chief targets landlords who have vast holdings, who have acquired these by sheer grabbing, who hold political power and who are despotic. We give special consideration... to the enlightened gentry who endorse and follow our policies and who support our revolutionary war.

We should excel in combining legal, illegal and semilegal activities through a widespread and stable underground. A revolutionary underground developing beneath democratic and legal or semilegal activities should promote the well-rounded growth of the revolutionary forces, serve to link otherwise isolated parts of the Party and the people's army for popular uprisings in the future and for the advance of the people's army. (Guerrero, *Specific Characteristics of our People's War*, 1970:182-183 and 185).

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negotiated by President Ramos and Prime Minister Mahathir during the former's visit in Kuala Lumpur. (COIR Notes, 1997). In addition to the pressure from the Office of the President, the project was also actively supported by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which recently took over the administration of the autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao. Thus the opposition to such project was unfortunately not coming from the peasants directly affected by it, but from outside NGOs and peasant organizations -- making the opposition's impact marginal.

<sup>36</sup> Source: a top DAR official quoted by one of my informants.

The subsequent ideological, political and organizational make-up of the ND peasant organizations, led by the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP, Peasant Movement of the Philippines) was framed mainly from this general orientation set out by the CPP.<sup>37</sup> Two aspects of this orientation have to be reiterated. First, “genuine agrarian reform” can only be achieved after victory of the revolution; and second, while the revolution is being waged, partial and selective implementation of revolutionary agrarian reform may be carried out. The promise of and partial implementation of land reform based on the principle of free land redistribution are thus primarily aimed at mobilizing the peasants for the first stage of the revolution.

This orientation accounted for the phenomenal growth of the ND movement, especially in the countryside during the 1970s and the early 1980s under the authoritarian regime. However, the same ideological and political framing became the source of the movement’s weakening and subsequent dissipation in the early 1990s amidst significant political-economic changes in the global, national and local settings. The intensification of internal conflicts within the CPP leadership which occurred amidst the movement’s isolation during and after the EDSA People’s Uprising in February 1986 that overthrew the Marcos government led many of the movement’s key leaders to question the basic principles of the revolution as stated in the excerpts above. This in-fighting led to the movement’s split in 1993.<sup>38</sup>

The KMP was formally launched in July 1985 and immediately became the main open-legal peasant movement opposed to the authoritarian regime. As the creator of KMP, the CPP closely controlled the peasant organization in a very “instrumentalist” fashion, with most of its leaders and staff members running the organization from the national down to provincial levels were party cadres.<sup>39</sup> To many activists, the principal concern then was to overthrow the authoritarian regime and that the CPP was a viable option, thus the ideological-political-organizational control was hardly an issue within the movement at that time. In fact, the CPP had been mainly responsible for the subsequent growth and popularity of KMP in the country by providing the organization its mass-base and its corps of committed intellectual-activists. The biggest contribution of KMP during the remaining months of the Marcos regime was to publicly expose the failure of the land reform program, the deteriorating economic condition of the peasants, and the widespread violations of human rights in the countryside.<sup>40</sup>

The KMP remained the most vocal, high profile and active peasant organization even during the early years of the new Aquino administration. Because it was able to position itself at the national level, it was able to play a significant role in the subsequent policy debate about agrarian reform.<sup>41</sup> It was also KMP that led some 20,000 peasants who marched to the Presidential Palace on 22 January 1987 to press for land reform, but were fired upon by the police and military forces, killing 13 marchers and wounding dozens more. During the subsequent legislative debate about land reform, however, KMP was no longer the only organization publicly projected and popularly recognized. Other progressive peasant organizations developed during

<sup>37</sup> Other organizations within the ND rural movement included the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), National Federation of Rural Women (Amihan) and National Movement of Small Fisherfolk (PAMALAKAYA). See Lara and Morales (1990).

<sup>38</sup> For an interesting insider’s analysis of the CPP split, refer to Rocamora (1994a). See also Pollard (1992) for internal democracy issue; and Boudreau (1994) for demobilization of the Philippine (especially, ND) protest movement.

<sup>39</sup> For instance, all but one of the national council members of KMP were CPP members. Only Jaime Tadeo, KMP’s chairperson, was the non-CPP member in the national council. All major decisions in terms of political positioning, ideological biases, and finances were tightly controlled by the CPP. This instrumentalist relationship of subordinating KMP to the CPP had stifled initiatives of the peasant leaders and later fomented widespread dissent among members and leaders of KMP.

<sup>40</sup> Refer to the proceedings of the International Solidarity Conference for the Filipino Peasants held in 1986 (1988); Hick (1987).

<sup>41</sup> In fact, KMP’s popular charismatic leader Jaime Tadeo was appointed by President Aquino to the Constitutional Commission in 1986 that drafted the post-Marcos constitution of the country. The post-Marcos land reform began to be debated in this Commission.

the political opening in 1986 such as the highly differentiated social-democratic group. This social-democratic bloc pushed for the formation of a broad national coalition of peasant - the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) launched in mid-1987. The KMP and other ND rural people's organizations, still reeling from the political isolation resulting from the ND movement's boycott of the "snap" presidential elections contested by Marcos and Aquino in February 1986, joined the coalition, but with extreme reservations, principally rooted in ideological differences with the moderate social-democrats. CPAR was at the forefront of the peasants' lobby for a more progressive land reform policy, often times receiving more publicity than KMP. The KMP, not without basis, never believed that a meaningful land reform policy could be enacted by a national legislative body overwhelmingly dominated by the big landlords. Thus the stress of KMP was to expose the "anti-land reform character" of the Aquino regime and at the same time put forward the alternative of a radical version of land reform (KMP, 1986a; 1986b). It intensified its national campaign for widespread peasant occupation of idle and abandoned lands and Marcos crony-owned lands in order to politically project the land reform issue more than to secure and consolidate actual lands to address the pressing needs of the peasants.<sup>42</sup>

When CARP was enacted into law in June 1988, it was rejected by almost all of peasant organizations across political spectrum. CPAR formulated its alternative policy proposal of land reform called the "People's Agrarian Reform Code" or PARCode, and vowed to amend CARP through the "people's initiative" clause enshrined in the Constitution through a nationwide signature campaign. The KMP erected the most radical critique of CARP, totally rejecting the policy as "pro-landlord" and "anti-peasant." It was not interested in the CPAR signature campaign and instead intensified its land occupation campaign, a strategy it deemed to be more effective to polarize the political situation to put the ND radical form of struggle (*i.e.* armed struggle), which was then beginning to lose vigor, back on agenda as the most viable option for a radical transformation of the society. In many cases, KMP's land occupations were conducted with the direct participation of the NPA; in other cases, areas that were projected as KMP-occupied lands were the same communities that had in fact earlier been subjected to the CPP's "agrarian revolution" program. In still other cases, local peasants had occupied lands and later sought assistance from KMP. But, most of these land occupations were not sustained.

In the Aquafil estate case in San Jose, Mindoro, the land occupation led by a local KMP chapter and directly supported by the NPA led to violent repression by corporate guards, police and the military. Peasant leaders were killed, crops destroyed, and the peasants' houses burned. Another case in Bukidnon ended up in the same fate. The well-known land invasion conducted by KMP in the IRC estate in Mamplasan, Binan, Laguna, was so heavily militarized that core activists from the CPP had to abandon the community, leaving the peasants alone. In the end, the peasants got the land but were later persuaded or coerced by real estate brokers aided by the military to sell the land, which has since been turned into a major industrial park.<sup>43</sup> In a major summing-up activity made by KMP in early 1992, the organization's secretary general who comes from Negros island in the Visayas where KMP had occupied about 45,000 hectares, admitted two crucial points about land occupation. On the one hand, the majority of invaded lands were later

<sup>42</sup> Printed minutes (internal document) of KMP's strategic assessment and planning, February 1992.

<sup>43</sup> Refer to the following studies about these land occupations (but done in the context of projecting an "alternative route" to land reform): Hipolito (1994) on Langkaan case in Cavite; Canlas (1994) on two cases in Negros Occidental; Canlas (1992) on two local cases in Bukidnon; and Fuentes and Paring (1992) for Aquafil estate in Dan Jose, Mindoro. For a critical article about the final turn of events in the IRC estate in Mamplasan, Binan, Laguna occupied by a local KMP chapter, refer to the article of Juan Sarmiento, Jr. serialized in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (30 November - 3 December 1992).



recovered by the landlords with the aid of private armies and the military, and relatedly on the other, those lands which were maintained by the organization had not been made productive. Specifically, he pointed out that not more than ten percent of the total occupied lands were actually rendered productive. There were several reasons identified for this failure. First, most of the areas were heavily militarized so that the peasants could not resume their normal farming activities. Second, almost no government or private institution wanted to lend credit to the peasants occupying the lands. Third, the pool of cadres - peasants or otherwise - assigned in their communities were trained as political activists and not as business entrepreneurs who could help these communities organize profitable enterprises. This was especially difficult since, which is the fourth reason, the majority of the occupied lands were marginal. Fifth, and perhaps a summary of the earlier factors, was that when the communities started to be militarized, the peasants normally did not make an exhaustive effort to stay perhaps because they felt there was not much at stake in the land: no legal titles and productive activities. In short, the land occupation campaign of KMP during the second half of the 1980s had contributed to keeping the issue of land reform on the national agenda, but had failed as an alternative land reform program that can be implemented outside the state. Internally for the ND movement, the land occupation campaign failed to create the political polarization that would be necessary to put the revolutionary movement back on track.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, the revolutionary land reform program being carried out selectively in some areas where the NPA was strong suffered a similar fate as KMP's land occupations. The campaigns for land rent reduction, abolition of usury, and selective land confiscation carried out by the communist insurgents made initial and partial gains for the peasants, as some lands were redistributed to landless peasants while land rents and loan interests were reduced in areas where the NPA was strong. But as soon as the general politico-military condition began to be unfavorable to the communist rebels in the late 1980s, most of these partial gains were rolled back as landlords later violently took back their lands.<sup>45</sup> The campaign to eradicate usury proved to be a very contentious issue within the revolutionary movement because in most cases where this campaign was launched, local moneylenders simply withdrew from their activities, resulting in a drain from the community of much-needed cash to finance rural village production. In the end, many peasants even in the guerilla zones contracted loans from these moneylenders anyway but conceal it from the guerillas.

As stated earlier, the ideological, political and organizational orientation accorded by the CPP to KMP, accounted for its strength during its early years, especially under an authoritarian regime. But the same factors led to its weakening toward the 1990s. The static "semi-feudal, semi-colonial" analysis by the ND movement of the Philippines society locked KMP in a situation of inflexibility amidst profoundly and rapidly changing context. The "statist" and thus "maximalist" (*i.e.* "all or nothing") attitude of the ND movement in regard to the question of state power imprisoned KMP in a situation where it was unable to take full advantage of political opportunities opened in the agrarian front. For example, while there were pronouncements by KMP leaders that they were open to tactically using the few positive provisions in CARP, the organization maintained a consistent posture of rejecting CARP and denouncing even the liberal reform advocates who were within the DAR.

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<sup>44</sup> For reflections from other similar land occupation experience (especially Peru), see Hobshawm (1974).

<sup>45</sup> For a study on how the agrarian revolution was carried out in a community level, refer to Padilla (1990) which is about a "success story" in Bicol (southern part of Luzon); but refer to Putzel (1995) on how such gains were later rolled-back.



By the late 1980s, when it was clear that the mass base of the ND movement had been seriously affected by the government's counter-insurgency operations, the general call within the movement was to "recover" the "lost" mass base. The National Peasant Secretariat (NPS) of the Central Committee of the CPP responded to this by revising many orthodoxy in the strategy and tactics of the CPP. Relative to other CPP organs, the NPS came up with one of the earlier critiques of the CPP analyses and strategy. Among other key issues, the NPS called for invigorated organizing work in the more populous lowland areas (the CPP's stress was upland, mainly for guerilla base building) through "inclusive," "fast-track," and "issue-based" organizing methods aimed at achieving palpable gains for the peasants. The alternative strategy was inclusive because it aimed to go beyond the rigid class-line of the CPP (only the poor and low-middle peasants have to be organized) by including other sections of the rural population, especially among the peasantry. It should be fast-track compared to the "step by step," "solid" (meaning, clandestine) organizing method of the NPA. Finally, it aims for immediate palpable socio-economic gains. The direct implication of this adjustment was that, first, clandestine organizers cannot play a principal role within this type of movement; open-legal organizers were the most appropriate in this situation; second, legal peasant organizations and their leaderships have to have greater role; and third, these organizations have to engage the state in their struggles if they were after some tangible economic gains in issues such as land, irrigation, price subsidies, infrastructures.<sup>46</sup> From late 1989 until 1993, such an approach proved to be effective in recovering lost mass base areas, organizing new communities, and securing concrete socio-economic gains for the peasants. By 1992, different "non-KMP," "ND-influenced" peasant organizations were formed along crops such as the National Federation of Rice and Corn Peasants (BUTIL) and National Federation of Small Coconut Farmers (KAMMPIL). At this point, tactical struggles for land using the positive provisions of CARP could only be carried out sporadically since the DAR bureaucracy did not want to work with progressive peasant organizations.

Meanwhile, many NGOs under the influence of the NPS worked along this adjusted concept of peasant work. At the height of the CPP influence, many of the well-known NGOs supporting the peasant movement had been well into the fold of the ND movement. In fact, many of the party decisions over the direction and conduct of the peasant movement had been carried out through these NGOs who were run by party intellectuals. But these same NGO-based party intellectuals, who were directly exposed to peasant struggles, were the first ones to be critical of the 'instrumentalist' attitude of the CPP toward peasant organizations and NGOs, so it was not surprising that they were the most active in the internal re-orientation drive within the ND movement. At the forefront was the PEACE Foundation (Philippine Ecumenical Action for Community Empowerment).<sup>47</sup>

By early 1992, KMP was already geared to "institutionalize" the adjusted orientation in defiance of the official CPP line. However, the by the end of 1992, serious split within the CPP occurred which had far-reaching effect in all ND organizations - open-legal and clandestine-illegal - so that the initial momentum of KMP re-orientation have to see substantial realization outside the ND organizational framework.

<sup>46</sup> The initial thoughts about this re-orientation were contained in the "September Thesis" drafted by the NPS in 1988. The proposal was rejected by the CPP leadership during the 1989 Political Bureau meeting, instead the NPS was asked to implement the CPP's program entitled "*Mga Tungkulin ng Kilusang Magbubukid sa Dekada Nobenta*" (popularly known in the peasant circle as the "Task of the Decade" where the open legal peasant movement was to serve even more in guerilla base-building. The NPS went on anyway to implement its own "tasks" defying the orders of the top CPP leadership.

<sup>47</sup> On this last point, see Putzel (1995); refer also to Rocamora (1994a)

5.2. *“A hundred flowers bloomed, a thousand schools of thought contended.”* The brewing disunity within the CPP since the mid-1980s over the question of strategy, led to a full-blown split by 1993. The CPP, NPA and the united front (NDF) and all their legal organizations (like KMP) split into at least four major groups. One group “reaffirmed” the basic principles of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist line under the leadership of Armando Liwanag.<sup>48</sup> Another group came to be known as the “third bloc,” also known as the “democratic bloc,” which is a highly heterogeneous group composed of various groups that has opted to undergo a process of rethinking and renewal without fixing any ideological or political line for the moment.<sup>49</sup>

The key leaders of KMP, including its chairperson Jaime Tadeo, opted to dissociate themselves from the Maoist bloc and the tarnished name of KMP, and instead formed the *Demokratikong Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (DKMP, Democratic Peasant Movement of the Philippines). On the one hand, the Maoist KMP retained control of a sizeable portion of the original (but largely constricted) mass base of the organization mostly in upland, interior areas controlled by the NPA. On the other, the DKMP, while taking a modest share of the original base, was composed more of local peasant organizations that emerged during the re-orientation period since the late 1980s along cropline.<sup>50</sup> The DKMP vowed to pursue the militant tradition of KMP and to further develop the aborted ideological, political and organizational re-orientation. Liberated from the dogmatism, the DKMP loosely identifies itself with the “third bloc.” The first major resolution of DKMP was to engage the government on the issue of land reform, using CARP as a starting point. Such opening of DKMP was partly internally-driven (the desire to continue the re-orientation to reposition itself politically) and partly externally-driven as political opportunities have opened up. At this point, the new DAR leadership was proving its reformist tendencies.

Realignments of different left and center-left political organizations marked the post-1992 period. After Ramos got elected in mid-1992, CPAR was disbanded mainly because about half of the member organizations had opted to support the presidential electoral bid of Ramos, even though he campaigned for a 50-hectare retention limit for land.<sup>51</sup> The demise of CPAR and the ND split in turn created an opportunity for realignments within the broad left and center-left peasant movement and NGO community. A new coalition of NGOs and peasant organizations was formed, namely, the Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS), which brought together the former ND peasant network (e.g. DKMP and PEACE Foundation), the so-called “popular-democrats” and the independent socialist BISIG. In the addition, despite the absence of formal organizational coalition, various organizations across political spectrum began to cooperate in selected tactical issues. The emergence of these broad formations of autonomous peasant organizations, NGOs and political movements, combined with the widespread erosion of the CPP’s influence both within the progressive movements’ circle and in the national polity more generally, thus ushered in an era marked by militant but pragmatic rural people’s movement in the country which impacted positively on the implementation of CARP.

## 6. Autonomous Social Mobilizations From Below ‘Meet’ Reformist Initiatives From Above

<sup>48</sup> Widely believed to be the pseudonym of Jose Maria Sison who, since 1987, has lived in exile in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

<sup>49</sup> The two other blocs were the Manila-Rizal group which opted to exorcise itself of “Maoism” and shifted to a purely “workerist” party, and the other was the Central Mindanao/Moro group which continues to relate with all non-Maoist blocs.

<sup>50</sup> For a brief summary of the split in KMP, refer to the 5-year development plan of DKMP (1993).

<sup>51</sup> There were several reasons for (and interpretations of) the demise of CPAR. One view among the various analyses is Putzel (1995).

*6.1. State reformists.* The reform-oriented leadership in the DAR since 1992 - coming from different ideological tradition and political affinity, has been driven by a combination of motivations, stresses of concern, and strategic agenda, namely, a) to broaden the government's political legitimacy (and electoral) base; b) to contribute to the breaking up of the landlord hegemony in the countryside; c) to hasten the process of agricultural modernization; d) to empower the peasants economically and politically; or e) to completely debase the communist insurgents. The state reformists within the DAR have achieved a certain degree of autonomy from other anti-reform policy currents within the state and society, and at the same time, was able to build up its capacity to implement the reform. The beefing up of its national bureaucracy of reformist and qualified officials and employees (and neutralizing if not isolating conservative elements within the bureaucracy), the renewed interest of foreign funders to the program, and its ability to make modest but positive "reforms" of the reform policy in response to arising actual needs, are among the manifestation of its capacity. Above all, the state reformists within the DAR correctly identified the role that autonomous social mobilization from below plays. What they needed was a kind of societal group that would be militant, daring and widespread, but at the same time pragmatic enough to be able to work within the possibilities and limits of the program. By 1993, the DAR leadership, had to start moving into private estates - the most contentious component of CARP - where an alliance with strong, autonomous peasant organizations was identified by the DAR leadership as indispensable.

Moreover, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources or DENR had also witnessed the emergence of reform-oriented sub-groups. Another agency that hosted a core of influential state reformists was the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) with the appointment of Virgilio David as administrator (a former military general but an ardent advocate of a liberal land reform). Other smaller agencies either got reformist leaders like the Cooperative Development Agency (CDA), or have conservative leaders but have rank and file employees who are highly unionized with leftist orientation like the National Food Authority (NFA). But no single agency (not even the DAR) can be claimed to be reformist as a whole.

The agencies that have anti-land reform leaderships were the Department of Agriculture (DA), Trade and Industry (DTI), and Finance (DoF). These agencies have been the forerunner of the fast-track development strategy of the government. The DA has prioritized agricultural modernization at the expense of land reform. It launched and tried to implement the MTADP which aims to make the country globally competitive in agricultural exports. It also encouraged and led strong lobby for the exclusion of commercial farms from land reform. The DTI supported the thrust of the DA and had been at loggerheads with the DAR over several cases of land use conversion cases of farmlands to industrial and commercial uses. The DoF has been active in lobbying to deprioritize CARP spending. Although the DAR secretary enjoyed the full confidence of the President, recently (since the mid-1997) the Chief Executive Secretary of the President emerged to be a staunch anti-land reform official who pushed for the withdrawals of CLOAs from peasant beneficiaries to pave the way for land use conversions for foreign and domestic investors. The legislative bodies continued to be dominated by landlords who constantly tried to pass new laws to further dilute the law (Ochoa, 1997).

*6.2. Autonomous societal groups.* Meanwhile, the political landscape of the peasant organizations, NGOs, and political movements have also been dynamically altered in light of, among other events, the CPAR demise and the ND split (Rocamora, 1994b). New players emerged (such as KAMMPIL and PARRDS), strong groups grew weak (specifically, the Maoist

bloc), alignments were altered, and traditional, co-opted peasant organizations were increasingly isolated in light of the ascension to power by reformists within DAR and the proliferation of other “reformist enclaves” elsewhere in the executive branch of the government. Specifically, confronted by the reality that the only viable option for the peasantry in the current situation is something in between a full-scale peasant revolution and “everyday forms of resistance,” the DKMP concludes that the only vehicle for land reform at the given moment is CARP. In its analysis, theoretically, CARP - then and now - was a conservative piece of land reform policy. But, the perception about CARP has been transformed from a conservative into a progressive policy on land reform. This analysis flows from the reading of the situation that in 1986, at the height of the post-Marcos euphoria, and when the socialist alternatives (and thus radical land reforms) were not yet in full retreat, CARP was conservative. But in the early 1990s, when most of the reformed sectors in many countries in Latin America, indigenous communal lands in Africa, and state cooperative farms were being dismantled and privatized and the state’s role and initiatives being rolled back especially from redistributive reforms like land reform, CARP emerges to be a progressive policy in this current context.

Meanwhile, the anti-reform societal forces appeared to have shifted strategies too. They were no longer as high profile as they used to be during the policymaking process of CARP. The landlord organizations were no longer active nationally, except for the aggressive anti-land reform campaigns by big real estate organizations. The main channels through which they were trying to bloc the land reform was on the ground level through different ways of evasion. These were carried out in alliance with the anti-land reform state actors.

Since 1992, the overall stage on which CARP implementation is being set was thus marked by state and societal actors’ changing degrees of power and influence, erosion of leftist hegemonic groups, flourishing of pluralist formations, alteration of alliances, and shifting terrains of struggles. These political dynamics have far-reaching impact on CARP implementation.

6.3. *State Reformists From Above Meet Autonomous Social Mobilizations From Below.* In March 1997, 190 DAR officials and NGO-PO (peasant organizations) community organizers and peasant leaders participated in the second national DAR-NGO-PO workshop (the first was in 1996) on how to “fast-track” CARP implementation. It called to “*hasten* implementation of agrarian reform in still undistributed agricultural lands,” and to “*defend* CARPed lands threatened by land use conversions and other anti-agrarian reform moves.” The conference vows also to “*promote* productivity and income improvement in tenancy-free communities,” and to “*push for* a positive policy environment for a more just and meaningful agrarian reform and rural development.”<sup>52</sup> The workshop was convened by “National Task Force 24,” an initiative by DAR to fast-track CARP implementation in 24 provinces identified as major areas of highly contested big landholdings. The NGO-PO community is represented by PARRDS. Such initiative was part of what the DAR pointed out to be the several gains in terms of relationship between the NGO-PO community and the DAR, namely, a) one-on-one dialogue where organizations go to the DAR office for a dialogue; b) NGO-initiated campaigns; and c) DAR-initiated campaigns.<sup>53</sup>

6.3.1. *One-on-one dialogue.* Many local cases had been elevated by the pro-reform forces to the national office of DAR for a speedy resolution in favor of the peasants. This is especially with regard to local cases which were “explosive” in character, meaning, cases that bore the

<sup>52</sup> Executive Summary of Workshop proceedings, 1997:1 (computer print-out from PARRDS); original highlights)

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p.3.

potential for violence because of landlord resistance, or because they entailed top level intervention in light of the ambiguities of CARP, such as the case of the peasant women in a farmworkers' cooperative in Basilan (Mindanao) who petitioned for the right to be direct beneficiaries of the land reform program (such local mobilization resulted in an amendment to CARP upholding the distinct rights of women to be direct beneficiaries) (Rimban, 1997a), or in the event that the landlord resistance went beyond the level of power of pro-reform state and societal actors at the local level. The direct intervention of national DAR officials proved to be effective in resolving local disputes in favor of the peasants.

*6.3.2. NGO-PO-initiated campaigns and projects.* There were numerous initiatives of this type such as the Provincial Education Teams (PETs) where paralegal training-workshops were conducted in several occasions and local places. In 1994, a nationwide broad-based conference participated in by NGOs, peasant organizations, political organizations, foreign agencies, academics, and government officials formed a campaign machinery dubbed as the "Philippine Campaign for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development," or PhilCARRD. The continuity and local expression of such a broad-based, across political spectrum multisectoral campaign body, were the ProCARRDs (or the Provincial Campaigns for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development) which provided additional strength for pro-land reform forces at the local level. In early 1995, PhilCARRD sponsored a conference in Amsterdam where members of the European Parliament, representatives of various governmental offices for overseas development assistance, non-governmental funding agencies, and other NGOs and academics attended; it aimed to draw political and financial support from the participants for CARP implementation.

*6.3.3. DAR-initiated campaigns and projects.* The first (and mainstay) initiative of the DAR that involved NGO-PO cooperation was the formation of the so-called Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs). Put simply, ARCs are "show cases" of the DAR, where land redistribution should occur and package of support services and infrastructures are to be poured into in a concentrated and focused manner in a community of adjacent villages. The government's target was somewhere around 1,000 ARCs nationwide. However, one criticism by some peasant organizations and NGOs about this concept was that the ARC concept was narrow in scope and that in practice, the communities selected where the less contested landholdings. The social-democratic affiliated NGOs and peasant organizations were the only ones that were actively working within these areas, so that by early 1997, out of the 800 identified ARCs only 113 have NGOs and peasant organizations. Other more critical groups, especially the former ND organizations, opted not to deal with the ARC project and instead chose to engage in the more contentious private landholdings where external intervention is much more needed (Santoalla and Oliveros, 1994). Thus, the two other DAR initiatives that focus on the highly contested landholdings, were immediately accepted by these groups, namely, "National Task Force 24," and the "Task Force Sugarlands."

As cited above, the Task Force 24 identifies 24 provinces where the positive interaction between the DAR and peasant organizations and NGOs are most necessary given the potential for strong landlord resistance to land reform. This committee entailed collective efforts among the state and societal pro-reform forces to identify major landholdings, or on-going local land disputes, joint strategizing on how to defeat the landlords' resistance to expedite expropriation and land redistribution. The dynamic and often times conflict-ridden interaction between the local DAR officials and local NGOs and peasant organizations are mediated by national level DAR officials and societal organizations. The experience of many pro-reform societal organizations in

this type of arrangement was that even those local DAR officials who have strong tendency to either be “fence-sitters” if not outrightly anti-land reform were either neutralized or “converted” to reformism since they know that the top DAR leadership puts a lot of stake and importance on this joint effort. As one veteran activist said: “when the local officials knew that you have connections with their higher officials, they respect and pay attention to your demands, but when they knew that you have no contacts above, they won’t even give you the minimum level of attention much more respect.”<sup>54</sup>

The “Task Force Sugarlands” was also initiated by DAR to push for the CARP implementation in perhaps the most contentious part of the country - Negros island, where the highly organized landlords have been known for their violent repression of militant and autonomous peasant movements. During the CARP deliberation, the sugar barons were most active in trying to block any version of land reform - liberal or conservative. However, compared to the progress of the TF 24, the TF Sugarlands is yet to take off (as of this writing). The DAR appeared to be caught in a powerful lobby within the state against sweeping implementation of land reform in the island.

There are several other important areas where the reform-oriented elements within the DAR and the autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs have positively interacted with each other in CARP. In 1995, during the legislative final deliberation about the exemption of fishponds from CARP, DAR agitated the NGO-PO community to mobilize, providing information where and when the legislative committee were meeting, documents that would boost the argument in favor of reform, etc. Although in the end, the exemption was enacted into, but not without small, but important, victories to farmworkers’ benefits in these farms. The DAR encouraged mobilizations against other anti-land reform state agencies like the Department of Agriculture, especially against its too “productivist,” no-land reform strategy of agricultural modernization. Such mobilizations eventually led to the resignation of the DA’s secretary in early 1996. The DAR also agitated mobilizations to increase CARP budget, as it encouraged mobilizations before the Land Bank of the Philippines for speedy disposition of land reform cases within the bank’s jurisdiction, while it supported widespread mobilization of peasants to distribute several public lands originally excluded from CARP, like military reservations. The DAR reformists also actively checked tendencies within the military to repress autonomous peasant organizations.

Meanwhile, state reformists in other agencies have been similarly supportive of mobilizations from below. The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) has also formed a “task force” aimed at expediting CARP implementation. The PCA encouraged mobilizations against landlord resistance and conniving state officials. It also allowed autonomous peasant leaders to “penetrate” state institutions, for instance, by appointing a militant peasant leader to the board of directors of the PCA. The DENR has also formed a similar DENR-NGO-PO formation to expedite processing of ancestral domain claims and distribution of public lands to peasant beneficiaries.

This symbiotic interaction between state reformists and social mobilization from below has reinvigorated the process of implementation of CARP. But this development currently faces several serious threats. First, the World Bank recently called for a halt of CARP implementation for the 24 hectares and below and to shift to a “market-assisted” land reform; second, the

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<sup>54</sup> Personal interview with a veteran activist involved in the National Task Force 24 (May 1997, Netherlands)

legislative inroads created by the (Senate-hatched) Agricultural Commission (AgriCom) seek to modernize the Philippine agricultural sector at the expense of land reform; and finally the currently debated issue of (Constitutional) Charter change. This charter change campaign aims to amend the constitutional provision limiting the president to a single term, in order to make way for a re-election bid for Ramos in 1998. Anti-land reform forces are looking for this opportunity to open the flood gates for further dilution, if not complete recall, of the constitutional mandate for land reform.

## 7. Summary

The imperatives of private capital accumulation in the neoliberal era have warranted the Philippine elites' reliance on three "nutrient" sources to finance its industrial development project, namely, foreign-direct investments, foreign exchange remittances of overseas Filipinos, and dollar-earning low volume-high value section of the country's agriculture. This development strategy is being carried out against the background of highly inequitable distribution of economic and political resources especially in the countryside where the rural communities have continued to be dominated by rural authoritarian elites. The land reform initiative was rooted in various, often conflicting, agendas of different state and societal actors, ranging from economic motivations to political necessities.

The CARP implementation, which has seen modest successes, can be categorized into two phases: the 'scandalous' first four years (1988-1992) where implementation was limited to the less contentious components of CARP and was characterized by anomalous real estate transactions. The second period (1992-1997), which was marked by relative stability and modest successes, was still focused on the less contentious parts of the program, but started to move into the most contentious private estates where landlords' resistance was very pronounced. The combined accomplishments of these two periods, or nine years into its implementation (by December 1996), CARP was able to achieve 55 percent of its target. These modest achievements were results of a confluence of events since 1992.

In 1992, the DAR got a new leadership led by Ernesto Garilao which opted to work with autonomous societal movements. Reform-oriented personnel became entrenched within the bureaucracy, from the national down to local offices. Around the same period, the CPP-led ND movement, which previously had virtual hegemony in the country's "progressive" people's movement, had serious split and began to dissipate. This led to the proliferation of peasant organizations and NGOs that are autonomous from any political movements or parties, and eventually contributed to the emergence of militant but pragmatic broad-based rural people's movement that then started to engage the government on CARP implementation. This change of strategy among the rural social movements was a consequence of two developments. First, the shift of perception of a conservative to a progressive CARP in the current context of neoliberal resurgence where truly redistributive and radical versions of land reforms are rendered practically not feasible. Second, prior to 1992, the DAR was dominated by bureaucrats who opted not only not to work with autonomous peasant groups but against them (as they chose to cooperate only with traditional and state co-opted peasant associations). With the assumption to power by the current reformist DAR leadership, political opportunities were opened up and seized upon by autonomous societal movements.

Finally, the symbiotic interaction between the state reformists, who were more concerned with political legitimacy rather than private capital accumulation, and the autonomous societal groups, which opted to explore and stretch the limits and possibilities of CARP, has greatly contributed to the expropriation of highly contested private estates and their redistribution to previously landless and near-landless peasants despite strong landlord resistance.

The national-level perspective discussed in this chapter will provide the broader context for the presentation and analysis of the five local case studies of this research discussed in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 3

### LAND REFORM STRUGGLES AND VICTORIES: A LOCAL-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE

#### 1. Introduction.

This chapter presents four local cases where actual redistribution of contentious private landholdings to peasant beneficiaries were successfully carried out: *sitio* Poultry (Nueva Ecija), Stanfilco (Davao del Norte), Candaba-San Luis (Pampanga), and Maloles estate in Candelaria (Quezon). The fifth case study is “partial success story” of the Greenfields estate in Calamba (Laguna) where the estate was not expropriated but a substantial concession was squeezed from the landlord. The discussion of each case will be framed within the four interrelated factors identified earlier. This chapter will show: first, why and how local peasant organizations linked up with external allies to form a combined force for social mobilization from below; second, why and how social mobilization from below linked up with state reformists; third, why and how some state actors initiated actions to implement land reform even when they run counter to the interests of the dominant classes in society; fourth, why and how the interaction between state reformists and social movements were achieved; and finally, how a coalition of pro-reform state and societal actors successfully overcame landlord resistance to land reform despite the presence of an anti-reform alliance with some state actors. The chapter concludes with a short summary of the main similarities and differences between the cases.

#### 2. Case One: *Sitio Poultry, Barangay Magsalisi, Jaen, Nueva Ecija*<sup>1</sup>

Thirty-eight tenant-peasant households have been cultivating the forty-nine-hectare Salomon estate located in *sitio* Poultry, *barangay* Magsalisi, Jaen, Nueva Ecija about four-hour drive north of Manila.<sup>2</sup> Planted to mango trees and vegetables, the farm used to be part of a bigger estate, *Hacienda* Gonzales, where most of the Salomon tenants used to work. In 1972, the farm was bought by the wealthy and politically powerful Pablo Salomon, who established a tenancy arrangement of 70-30 (in his favor). A former *mayor* of nearby San Leonardo town, the landlord had built and maintained an extensive network of elite allies and patrons at the provincial level. Meanwhile, his reliance on more “carrots” and less “sticks” characterized his patron-client relationship with the tenants who worked his estate.<sup>3</sup> By the late 1980s, the mango industry began experiencing a dramatic market boom domestically and internationally, prompting the government to identify mangoes as an “export winner” and to grant a 10-year deferment of redistribution of untenanted lands planted to mango under CARP. These became the twin incentives for the landlord to oppose the land reform program. In 1988, anticipating possible expropriation of his farm under CARP on the basis that it was a tenanted mango farm, the landlord maneuvered to evade reform. Using the existing patronage relationship, he “borrowed” from the tenants the right to cultivate the land for one year ostensibly to pay off his personal heavy indebtedness. Feeling

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<sup>1</sup> The accounts in this case study are taken largely from: a) the transcript of the taped interview with Ruben Esquejo, Jr., b) personal interview with the chairperson of the provincial peasant organization, MAKISAKA, and c) personal recollection of the author. Documentations by PEACE Foundation and DKMP also provided data.

<sup>2</sup> Nueva Ecija is located in the northeastern part of Central Luzon. In addition to its economic importance as the main producer of the country's staple food, rice, this region also has a special political significance historically. First, it was the site of numerous waves of peasant unrest since the Spanish period, and second, it was a laboratory for state reform initiatives like the Marcos land reform and the Green Revolution.

<sup>3</sup> Peasant studies are marked by exhaustive discussion of the patron-client relationship. It is a relationship where some political rights by the peasants were given up in exchange for some socio-economic benefits (“carrots”) where perpetuation of such a relationship is often made through actual or threat of violence or coercion (“stick”). For example, in *sitio* Poultry, the peasants voted for candidates whom the landlord endorsed in exchange of the continued access to land and for some occasional loans or “gifts.” Non-compliance of the peasants to such an “agreement” can mean withdrawal of “carrots” and threat of violence (“stick”) or continued carrots but more stick; but it can also be withdrawal of carrots without any threat of stick (see Fox, 1996; and Platteau, 1995).

“morally obligated,” the tenants readily complied with this “special, temporary arrangement,” even though it put their own subsistence into jeopardy. Complicating the matter was that the landlord had induced the tenants sign a document about this “special arrangement,” a weapon he would later use against them in court. In addition, the peasants, whose foreparents had been tenants of the same land, had no receipts of the land rentals that had been paid to Salomon since 1972.

Then in 1989, unknown to the peasants, the landlord applied for a 10-year deferment from CARP coverage of his estate claiming that it was an untenanted orchard.<sup>4</sup> When the “special arrangement” ended, he refused to give back the peasants tenancy rights. Feeling betrayed and having their main source of livelihood thus taken away from them, the peasants resolved to fight for resumption of the previous tenancy arrangement. Despite the existence of the signed agreement, and the lack of receipts to bolster their claim to the land, the tenants decided to bring their case to the *Barangay* Agrarian Reform Committee (BARC) and the Municipal Agrarian Reform Office (MARO). The local DAR officials did not respond immediately to their inquiry, but instead passed the petition on to higher DAR offices. The peasants learned later, based on the confession of local DAR officials, that the landlord had pressured them to decide on his favor.

After a cautious calculation of the overall situation, the BARC-MARO handed in a decision that went way beyond the demand of the peasants for tenancy resumption, ruling that the land ought to be redistributed to the peasants. Still fresh in their minds how the landlord had stripped them of their source of livelihood, the peasants unanimously agreed to elevate their demand to land redistribution. Confronted by a tactical defeat, the landlord apparently laid down a fallback position. While his petition for deferment was pending, the landlord applied for the retention rights of his children for a total of 18 hectares and at the same time took his case beyond the municipal level to the provincial level where he seemed to have greater influence. This evasive move was later revealed when the Provincial Adjudication Board (PARAD), reversing the earlier decision of the BARC-MARO, ruled in favor of the landlord’s petition for a 10-year deferment. The window of opportunity for the peasants to gain ownership and control of the land seemed to close with this decision. Indeed, from 1989 to 1991 the *sitio* Poultry families mobilized among themselves in their municipality, but without making any significant progress toward getting back the land. Then in early 1992, contact with an NGO was made which led to an important breakthrough for the peasants in their ongoing struggle for the land. This NGO, the Nueva Ecija Program for Agricultural Development (NEPAD), was at the time the provincial center of the Manila-based PEACE Foundation (introduced in the preceeding chapter) and actively involved in land reform initiatives in the province. NEPAD was working with the *Malayang Kaisahan ng mga Samahang Magbubukid sa Nueva Ecija* (MAKISAKA, Movement of Free Peasant Associations) which was a member of the national federation BUTIL (introduced in the preceeding chapter). Hearing their dilemma through MAKISAKA which was active in a town near Jaen, the NEPAD activists contacted the *sitio* Poultry peasants and offered their assistance (e.g. organizing support, legal advise). In dire need of allies, the peasants readily welcomed their offer. Together, the peasants and NEPAD activists closely reviewed the Salomon estate case, regularly consulting with some lawyers regarding the legal parameters of the dispute.

The peasants, now reinvigorated by the entry of their allies, elevated their case beyond the municipal level since the town level DAR, although sympathetic to the peasants, earlier had been overruled by the higher provincial adjudication board. The peasants, together with the NEPAD

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<sup>4</sup> CARP allows deferment of coverage for such farms.

activists, put pressure on the provincial DAR office, demanding that the earlier PARAD decision to defer land redistribution of the Salomon estate be recalled. But despite a series of mobilizations in the form of demonstration, pickets, and dialogue-confrontation with the provincial office, the provincial DAR stood firm on its decision favoring the landlord. Faced by this refusal to reopen the case at the provincial level, they further elevated their case at the DAR national office, a move facilitated by NEPAD which coordinated with its national center, PEACE Foundation, in providing legal, political, logistical and media work in support of the *sitio* Poultry peasants. These NGOs shouldered the transportation costs, provided food and accommodation in Manila for several days, helped in coming up with public information materials, and sought further legal assistance. A series of collective actions were conducted at the national level (e.g. pickets, dialogue-confrontation, mobilizing media groups to project their plight, and pitching camp in front of the national DAR office). Yet, despite the effort, nothing seemed to move in their favor. The DAR at this point was still under the leadership of Secretary Leong and was still heavily dominated by conservative officials and employees, since the liberal reform advocates had already left the DAR after the Abad controversy in 1990. Thus, despite the mobilizations, the case seemed to have “slept” at the DAR national office. When the new DAR leadership under Ernesto Garilao assumed office in July 1992, the *sitio* Poultry peasants and their allies saw some signs of hope that their case will be resolved. However, while the peasants were already becoming impatient about their situation and wanted an immediate resolution of the dispute, the national DAR leadership, only a few weeks in office, could not yet attend to specific local cases. In fact, it would take the new leadership more than a year to complete the internal “clean-up” Garilao had launched when he first came to power.

Frustrated by the inaction of the past DAR leadership but encouraged by the recent change in its leadership, and their with morale boosted by their new political-organizational network, in August 1992 (one month after the new secretary took office), the tenants decided to occupy and start cultivating the land. The land invasion was a major, albeit calculated, gamble on the part of the peasants, since CARP contains a clause against “premature entry” of peasants into contested lands.<sup>5</sup> But this did not deter them from invading the land, perhaps partly because of conflicting legal advice they had received from lawyers who pointed out the ambiguity of the law regarding “premature entry.” Meanwhile, the peasants’ NGO allies mobilized media people from Manila to cover their action in order to project the problem nationally.

The landlord was furious. On 3 August 1992, the first day of the land invasion, surprised and angered by the daring, militant action of those who used to be his timid clients, the landlord sent three armed men to harass the peasants. Nonetheless, the peasants continued their barricade and farmwork. But at midnight of the same day, while they were evaluating the day’s activity, known “goons” of the landlord fired at the peasants with automatic rifles.<sup>6</sup> Two local paramilitary (Citizen’s Armed Force Geographic Unit, or CAFGU) personnel, who were also members of the peasant organization and involved in the land invasion, fired back.<sup>7</sup> After several minutes of gunshot exchange, four of the peasants and two of the landlord’s goons were killed while a few others wounded.

The violent incident captured the headlines of the country’s major newspapers, especially because a field reporter of a national newspaper who was covering the land invasion was among

<sup>5</sup> This CARP provision is discussed in chapter 2 (section 2).

<sup>6</sup> In the Philippine context, “goons” are a sort of private armies under the payroll of powerful elites.

<sup>7</sup> The CAFGUs, who were generally recruited from the ranks of the peasants, were formed by the Aquino government during its “total war policy” against the communist insurgents. They became notorious human rights violators alongside the military and other “vigilante” groups.

those wounded in the gunbattle. The violence put strong pressure on the new DAR leadership to act expeditiously on the land dispute, while putting the landlord in a defensive situation where many of his provincial political patrons distanced themselves from him. The peasants, even more determined, continued to hold onto the land. In addition, the village organization formally affiliated with the provincial peasant organization MAKISAKA, which later in turn affiliated with DKMP, so that from late 1993 onward the national organization used its political muscle to exert added pressure on the DAR to act positively in resolving the *sitio* Poultry dispute.<sup>8</sup> The process of mobilizations at the national level facilitated by their allies NGOs and peasant organizations also gave the *sitio* Poultry peasants the opportunity to meet other peasants from different parts of the country who were also involved in land reform struggles. This played important role in providing broader (*i.e.* national) perspective for their local initiatives.<sup>9</sup> But the landlord continued to employ various legal tactics to block the implementation of land reform in his estate while the new DAR leadership remained caught in the complicated process of re-organization and re-orientation.

As a result, it took seventeen months of persistent pressure from the peasants and their allies for the DAR to disentangle itself from the landlord's legal machinations. In January 1994, the DAR revoked the earlier deferment clearance and issued a "mother" Certificate of Land Ownership Award, or CLOA- but only for the 23 hectares, while eight hectares were awarded to the landlord's son as his retention rights. However, the eighteen hectares planted to some 500 mango trees were not yet awarded to peasants, pending an appeal by the landlord in court.

But unlike before, at this stage, the DAR national office took an active and consistent position of rejecting all the landlord's petitions, forcing the landlord to appeal his case to the (national) Office of the President for deferment in 1995. The DAR national office prodded the peasants to file a counter-claim at the same office. Eventually, in 1996, the remaining eighteen hectares planted to mangoes were awarded to the peasants, which they decided to own and operate collectively. For the first time in their lives the peasants harvested mangoes and got all the money from the sale while their daily subsistence needs were insured by the food crop production.

There was a far-reaching "spill-over" effect of the *sitio* Poultry peasants' victory in the adjacent towns. The defeat of a known despotic landlord, the active role demonstrated by the new DAR leadership, the valuable assistance extended by the NGO allies, and the positive role the media played in the *sitio* Poultry land dispute - were all captured by the keen observant eyes of other peasants in the province. Thus by mid-1995, within the network of NEPAD<sup>10</sup> and the peasant organization MAKISAKA alone, more than 15,000 hectares - both private and public - were re/distributed to peasant beneficiaries. These included 3,100 hectares that used to belong to a military reservation, Fort Magsaysay, and were supposed to have been excluded from CARP, but were later covered by the reform program under pressure from mobilizations of pro-reform forces. As of this writing, the same provincial network of NGO and peasant organization is in the process of implementing the reform in other towns of the province as well.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> During this period DKMP facilitated a field visit of eight Germans belonging to the Protestant Farmers Association (PFA) of Wurttemberg which is a long-time solidarity partner of KMP (afterwards, DKMP). Moved by the peasant struggle for land in *sitio* Poultry, the PFA began a petition/letter-writing campaign addressed to Philippine government officials to resolve the case immediately in favor of the peasants. The Philippine agencies, conscientiously responded back to all these letters, partly because the German government is a major donor of overseas aid to the Philippines (especially to land reform-related projects). The PFA's solidarity work had certainly been a factor in the accumulation of strength of pro-reform forces.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see *The Manila Times*, 6 September 1996; also PEACE Foundation Program Assessment, 1996:23.

<sup>10</sup> NEPAD was later transformed into a new NGO - EMPOWERMENT and was also active in the "National Task Force 24."

<sup>11</sup> Personal interview with the chairperson of MAKISAKA; September 1997, Zurich, Switzerland.

### 3. Case Two: Stanfilco in Panabo, Davao del Norte<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the *sitio* Poultry story, the second case in this study pitted peasants against a huge multinational corporation. The estate in dispute involved the 1,004 hectares controlled by Dole-Philippines planted to Cavendish banana located in the town of Panabo, Davao del Norte in the southern island of Mindanao.<sup>13</sup> In 1965, the actual landowners, under the name of their joint corporation, Davao Abaca Plantation (DAPCO), had leased the estate to the Standard Philippine Fruit Company or Stanfilco, the division of Dole-Philippines that operates its plantations.<sup>14</sup> Dole used to directly run their plantations, but since the emergence of a “contract growing” scheme alongside the restructuring of the global agro-food complex, the company gradually has steadily shifted away from direct plantation operation. The contract growing mode of operation tends to be more profitable and less risky to multinational companies like Dole, since under this arrangement, foreign companies are no longer confronted with perennial “troubles” like minimum wages, wage increases and non-wage benefits, autonomous unions, lease rental issues (especially when the land is privately owned), and intermittent business risks (natural or otherwise). In a contract growership, optimal profits are squeezed from small producers, especially when there is near-monopoly in marketing and processing of products by one or a few big multinational companies, as is the situation in the Philippines with Dole. Equally important, these companies are attracted to contract growing for political reasons, since they may no longer be adversely affected by land reform and can divest at any time with little difficulty. The moves of Dole, a key player in this complex tale of land reform, can be better seen from this perspective.<sup>15</sup>

Right after CARP was promulgated, the landlords immediately seized the opportunity within its enabling law for coverage deferment for ten years for commercial farms. In 1991, the regional DAR office in Davao gave a deferment permit to the estate’s actual landlords for the 870 hectares they had leased to Stanfilco, the contract for which was set to expire in 1995. The remaining 134 hectares, devoted mainly to rice production and owned by the same landlords under the name of Mindanao Rice Company (Minrico), were placed under CARP, though the expropriation process did not begin until later.

The post-1992 period brought a confluence of factors that, working against the landlords, facilitated redistribution of the remaining 870 hectares to the farmworkers. First, despite their original anti-CARP position during the policy debate on land reform program in 1987-1988, Dole as well as other MNCs later began to realize the possibility of better profit opportunities under a “reformed plantation” where contract growership would supercede the direct operation system. Second, by then the DAR, under new leadership, had begun looking for an opportunity to publicly demonstrate its resolve to implement land reform in MNC-controlled plantations in Mindanao.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence of their altered calculations, the mobilization of the estate’s unionized farmworkers in favor of land redistribution was directly encouraged of both Dole and the DAR.

<sup>12</sup> The empirical data are primarily drawn from the following: various internal documents from the farmworkers’ unions/groups and Dole-Stanfilco, personal interview with a veteran trade unionist involved in the Stanfilco case, Report of the Fact-Finding Mission, and *The Manila Times*, 10-11 June 1997. For a general background on farmworkers’ trade unionism *vis-a-vis* CARP, refer to Ofreneo (1990).

<sup>13</sup> Dole is one of the world’s biggest companies in caned and fresh fruits, and the largest in the Philippines. It is estimated that Dole-Philippines directly and indirectly controls about 36,000 hectares of private and public lands in Mindanao under different production arrangements. Most of these lands are planted to banana and pineapple. In the Philippines, the banana industry is popularly referred to “the goose that lays the golden eggs” as it continues to be a lucrative business. In 1996 alone, the industry earned \$140 million from exports. Dole accounted for 42 per cent of this total earnings. (*The Manila Times*, 10 and 11 June 1997).

<sup>14</sup> The lease was P80 million for the whole estate for ten years (*The Manila Times*, 10 June 1997, p.8)

<sup>15</sup> For an interesting study of contract growing arrangement (Pioneer corn seeds) in South Cotabato, see Vellema (1994).

<sup>16</sup> Several past anomalous land reform compliance of MNCs placed DAR in a very defensive situation with regard MNC plantations.

Thus in 1993 the existing union SEARBAI (Stanfilco Employees' Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association, Inc.) moved to challenge legally the deferment permit that had been granted to the landowners on the 870 hectares. Backed by the Stanfilco management, its workers' union ally at the national level, and the DAR national leadership, the DAR regional office decided in favor of the farmworkers' petition, revoking the deferment order for the 870 hectares and subjecting the estate to immediate expropriation. The landlords tried to appeal the case twice before the DAR national office, but were rejected by the DAR secretary both times. In January 1995, the DAR national office proceeded to issue "mother" CLOAs for both the 134-hectare Minrico area and the 870-hectare Dole plantation in a highly publicized ceremony graced by DAR Secretary Garilao himself. In the same occasion, a new contract between Dole and the new "owners," represented by SEARBAI, was publicly presented and hailed by the DAR secretary as a "model" for other plantation estates slated for reform. But the subsequent turn of events revealed the onerous nature of this model, which placed the farmworkers at the losing end of the new arrangements.

The farmworkers' union SEARBAI was formed and legally registered before the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) back in 1991, a legal status that had been sought by the workers in response to a series of retrenchment measures implemented by Stanfilco since the late 1980s. Prior to this, many of the workers who later joined SEARBAI had been members of another farmworkers' association, *Nagkakaisang Manggagawa ng Stanfilco* (NAMASTAN, United Workers of Stanfilco,) which used to be linked with a broadly socialist-oriented, national labor federation, the National Federation of Labor (NFL), although the linkage had not been sustained. Nevertheless, the original incorporators and master list of SEARBAI members were all NAMASTAN members. Then prior to 1993, after leading a strike against the company on the question of the plantation's "CARPability," among other issues, the chairperson of NAMASTAN and 48 other workers were later laid off by Stanfilco. From then on, Stanfilco stood firm in excluding the retrenched workers from any agrarian reform benefits. In addition, the succeeding chairperson of NAMASTAN was also later terminated by Stanfilco. Meanwhile, the third wave of leadership in the association that also assumed leadership over the formal union SEARBAI shortly before 1993 (despite the absence of formal process of election or assembly) showed a willingness to cooperate with Stanfilco, motivated by the fact that the lease contract of the MNC with the actual landowner was about to expire; this meant the opening of some windows of opportunity to review the case of the estate for land reform (since, earlier it was able to secure deferment permit). The union, supported by Stanfilco and DAR, was indeed able to recall the deferment order and subject the estate to land redistribution, and later, forged a new contract with Stanfilco which would become a contested issue.

By the end of 1994, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) governing the new relationship between the company and SEARBAI had been drawn up. At this point, the declared number of farmworker-beneficiaries was 482. Eager to begin contract growing arrangements, Stanfilco even helped the union to expedite the process of expropriation by loaning huge amount of money for the land survey and "other expenses." The MOU, which was endorsed by the Provincial Agrarian Reform Office (PARO), committed the farmworkers-new landowners to a 25-year growership contract with Stanfilco. But surprised by the MOU and outraged by its contents, several SEARBAI members who had not been part of the negotiations questioned the contract on the basis of process and substance, contending first, that it had not resulted from a process of consultation with all SEARBAI members, and second, that it was extremely disadvantageous to the "former" farmworkers since their incomes would be substantially reduced. Under the new

growership contract, Stanfilco would pay only P22.50 (\$0.80/13 kilos) per box of bananas, which is very low by the standards of the banana business community.<sup>17</sup> Also questioned by many of the farmworkers was the MOU's provision for separation pay which had been used as leverage by Stanfilco to clinch the onerous contract. The company had made it appear that giving separation pay was an act of "generosity" from their side, even though Philippine labor laws required them to do so. Stanfilco had explicitly stated that it would not give separation pay if the farmworkers did not agree to the MOU.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the same MOU excluded 37 farmworker-beneficiaries plus some other office and technical employees of Stanfilco. Many of those excluded were leaders of an earlier strike against Stanfilco who subsequently had been laid off on the eve of the land expropriation process.

The problem about the terms of the MOU revealed the relatively uncritical stance the DAR national leadership had taken toward Stanfilco's earlier moves, and its rather fixated concern only on moving lands from private landlords to beneficiaries without probing deeper into other aspects which have a crucial bearing on the underlying purpose of land redistribution. The workers' criticisms were later accepted by many DAR officials in the region, who also began to be vocal about it when more dissidents from the ranks of the workers started to emerge. The disagreement over the terms of the MOU eventually brought about a split in SEARBAI, with one group defending the MOU (called SEARBAI-1) and another group rejecting it (called SEARBAI-2). The anti-MOU SEARBAI-2 filed a case at the DAR Arbitration Bureau (DARAB) calling for nullification of the MOU based on its onerous terms, the issue of inclusion/exclusion of several farmworkers, and the questionable mandate of SEARBAI-1 to represent the farmworkers. From mid-1995 to end of 1996, three successive union elections were held by "SEARBAI members" through the initiatives of the SEARBAI-2. In all elections, the candidate of SEARBAI-2 won the presidency. However, the first two elections were legally contested by SEARBAI-1 and eventually declared null and void by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) based on technical questions. As of this writing, the validity of the last election has yet to be determined, pending a formal protest lodged by SEARBAI-1.

The apparent influence of SEARBAI-2 over the majority of farmworkers as highlighted by the different election results prompted Stanfilco to negotiate with the second group. After some improvements in the wage conversion terms of the MOU, a "new covenant" was forged between the company and SEARBAI-2.<sup>19</sup> But the second group still failed to address the other contentious issues which had motivated other workers to reject the first MOU, namely, the exclusion of a number of farmworkers from the roster of CARP beneficiaries, as well as other wage and non-wage benefits. Meanwhile, put in a defensive situation, SEARBAI-1 had petitioned the DAR to split the estate between the members of the two unions signalling its acquiescence to the "new covenant" forged between SEARBAI-2 and Dole-Stanfilco. In October 1996, their petition was granted by the Provincial Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board (PARAD), giving formal recognition to both of the two unions. But this new arrangement also implied the exclusion of

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Stanfilco paid P60/box in the nearby Lasang town, or P26.50/box in another farm separated only by a highway. The P22.50/box translates approximately to a P92.50 daily wage, without any other wage and non-wage benefits. Previously, farmworkers were getting P146 daily wage plus other benefits. Before, wage and non-wage benefits were relatively generous, namely, 15 days vacation leave with pay, 15 days sick leave with pay, P2,500 hospitalization pay/year, P2,000 medicine allowance/year, free housing with estimated monthly rental of P350/month, overtime pay, and P35.00 meal allowance during night work. These were results of both the cumulative victories of workers' unionism over time, on the one hand, and the kind of corporate strategy of Dole, on the other. In 1995, the government-mandated minimum wage was somewhere around P145 per day.

<sup>18</sup> This was confirmed by the leader of what would become SEARBAI-2. Eventually, the workers received separation pay ranging from P100,000 to P400,000 but in a rather "vague" terms where such amount would be drawn from the income of the plantation during the first four years of operation under the new arrangement. Thus, essentially, the company only gave sort of a "cash advance" to workers to be deducted later from their own incomes.

<sup>19</sup> The specific improvement was on the wage-conversion of the price per box of bananas, *i.e.*, from an equivalent of P92.50/day in the first MOU to P117/day in the "new covenant."



other farmworkers who had not been included in the membership roster of either of the two SEARBAIs -- a preemptive move deliberately made by the two unions, since those excluded were precisely the ones that Stanfilco had vowed to "punish" for their past militant unionism.

Feeling again betrayed, the twice excluded farmworkers, joined by others from both of the two SEARBAI unions who were dissatisfied with the terms of the second MOU, began to tacticize about a new possible course of action. A common sentiment which emerged among the farmworkers within this group was in favor of individual titling as a way to get out of any possible onerous contract that Stanfilco might try to "impose" under a collectively-owned farm. Several sympathetic regional and national NGOs and political organizations were called to assist, including media groups which started to train their "lens" on the Stanfilco controversy.<sup>20</sup> This emerging coalition of forces was later joined by an unexpected local actor -- the expropriated landlord who also felt betrayed. The landlord had wanted full market rate compensation for the estate when his appeal for land reform deferment was rejected, but was frustrated by both the company and the DAR for two apparent reasons. For the DAR, which might have viewed Stanfilco as the more important player strategically than the landlord, a lower price for the estate was desirable as well as highly justifiable. For Stanfilco, it was only following the logic of the so-called "banana economics," *i.e.* the lower the market price of the land they are indirectly operating under growership contract, the lower the cost of bananas produced from that land and sold by the contracting farmers.<sup>21</sup> Thus motivated by the desire to "get even" with both company and the DAR, the landlord supported the actions of the third group of farmworkers politically and logistically. Public criticism by many DAR officials of the contents of the MOU served also as indirect encouragement to the twice-excluded, but now doubly-determined farmworkers.

Emboldened by this new support, a few hundred of them launched a series of daring land occupations. The three-wave land invasions, which began in mid-January 1997, put a total of about 400 hectares of the plantation under the farmworkers' control.<sup>22</sup> The action, which lasted for two months, ground the company's operation to a halt and caused an estimated loss of P23 million (almost \$1 million) to Stanfilco during this time. As if to demonstrate a more just and feasible alternative too, the group also harvested bananas and sold them to other buyers at a much higher price of P60/box.

Meanwhile, Stanfilco, supported by SEARBAI 1 and 2, was able to secure a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) from the Regional Trial Court (RTC) IV to stop the land invasion initiatives of the few hundreds of farmworkers who by then called themselves CARP-BUILD (CARP Beneficiaries United for Independent Land Development). Enforcement of the TRO was carried out by a combined force of military, police and paramilitary groups. This composite of armed forces remained in the area as the land invasion continued, and were later responsible for breaking through the barricades that had been put up by the farmworkers. Twelve farmworker-leaders were arrested and subsequently imprisoned for several days on robbery charges filed by Dole-Stanfilco, but the CARP-BUILD members continued to hold their ground.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The NGOs actively involved in the subsequent struggle in this case were FARMCoop, a Davao-based NGO working with farmworkers, the Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS).

<sup>21</sup> This was elaborated by the landlord himself and by a former financial analyst of Dole-Stanfilco who is now working with an NGO. Specifically, the landlord lamented that Dole helped in depressing the value of his estate at P51,000/hectare "by bribing local DAR officials." In nearby plantations some comparable lands were priced by the DAR at P165,000/hectare, according to the landlord.

<sup>22</sup> The first land invasion was done by about 37 farmworkers who occupied 40 hectares. The number of land invading groups that followed increasingly swelled and the area covered expanded.

<sup>23</sup> *Stanfilco Case Profile* - PARRDS (30 January 1997).



From the first day of the land invasion, the conflict was carried by the regional and national press, and this media attention would be sustained for several months and have a significant impact on the players involved. Media projection about the conflict put Stanfilco in a very defensive position, while at the same time putting the DAR national leadership in an embarrassing one as well. A fact-finding mission from Manila and Davao, composed of political and church luminaries as well human rights and NGO activists, went to the plantation to investigate the case and to lend moral support to protesting farmworkers.<sup>24</sup> The company, not knowing who was in the visiting group, was quite unfriendly and uncooperative. This behavior put them in an even worse light in the press. Moreover, the timely and high-profile media projection of the controversy contributed to averting violence when the military came into the picture.

Amidst the standstill, the DAR initiated a mediation session between all the farmworkers' groups and Stanfilco to thresh out the question of inclusion/exclusion of farmworkers as CARP beneficiaries. While the meeting was going on, BUILD members pitched camp in front of the mediation center for three days and two nights to pressure the different parties at the meeting. The result was a consensus decision to recognize all three groups as legitimate farmer-beneficiaries of land redistribution. BUILD was allotted 134 hectares, while the largest farmworkers' group which was SEARBAI 2 got the biggest chunk of land. The BUILD members returned to normal work in early April. Though the terms of the second MOU were not tackled during the mediation session, the groups did agree to address the matter in a different venue in the future.<sup>25</sup> BUILD's advocacy position is to press for individual titling to give the farmworkers-turned-landowners enough room for maneuver in case a fair contract cannot be forged with Stanfilco. This may give them the option to go on individual farming in the future. The initiative for individual titling is going on (as of this writing).<sup>26</sup>

The complications of land redistribution in Stanfilco case created waves of "spill-over effects" among many similarly affected societal and state actors. First, according to many close observers of the agribusiness community in Mindanao, the gamble made by Stanfilco in pushing for agrarian reform after initially resisting it was an eye-opener to many MNC agribusiness corporations for better business opportunities with "CARPed" plantations.<sup>27</sup> Second, many landowners in Mindanao who have lands leased to MNCs are now strategizing so as not to repeat the experience of the former landlords in this particular case. Third, many farmworkers see an important opening to owning the land they have been working on, but now realize that it will not automatically ensure that they will reap the fruits of their labor and the privilege of being owners of the land. Fourth, the lessons drawn from this controversial case prompted the DAR to be more cautious in implementing land reform in MNC-controlled plantations. Finally, political movements and national union federations, who were implicitly indifferent to CARP *vis-a-vis* plantation union work, were confronted by the potentially devastating implications of separating the issue of unionism and land reform.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Included in the fact-finding mission was former Congressman Oscar Santos (also ex-Presidential Peace Adviser of Ramos (PARRDS, Fact-Finding Report, March 1997).

<sup>25</sup> CARP-BUILD's faxed communication to PARRDS regarding the status of the dispute (5 April 1997).

<sup>26</sup> A veteran trade union organizer analyzes that the main challenge now for all the factions inside the plantation is how to undergo the difficult transition from farmworkers to landowners-managers-workers. The first few years of this transition would require the farmworkers to learn the dual tasks of unionism and cooperativism, a swing of focus to one will be detrimental to the workers because during this transition period, there exists two levels of relationship between Stanfilco and the farmworkers, namely, employer-employee and buyer-seller relationships. (personal interview, May 1997, the Netherlands)

<sup>27</sup> *The Manila Times*, 10 June 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Personal interview with a veteran trade unionist involved in Stanfilco case, May 1997, the Netherlands; several internal documents by CARP-BUILD and its NGO allies. See also *The Manila Times*, 10 June 1997.

#### 4. Case Three: Candaba-San Luis, Pampanga<sup>29</sup>

The conflict in this case involved around 6,000 hectares of irrigated ricelands in the towns of Candaba and San Luis in Pampanga, the center of the country's principal rice-growing region of Central Luzon. A one hour drive north of Metro Manila brings one to the expansive swamp of Luzon's central plains which extends to a number of adjacent towns of the provinces of Pampanga and Bulacan. This area, popularly known as the Candaba swamp, produces rice and vegetables which are cultivated only once a year during the dry season. During the rainy months the whole area lies submerged under runoff coming from Pampanga river. The overflow from the river brings different fresh water fish into the submerged farms, giving the area its unique dual character as a farmland and fishery ground.

Two features distinguish these communities from other typical rice areas in the country where the landlords have, over time, been weakened politically.<sup>30</sup> First, the urban sprawl expanding around these communities since the 1980s gradually developed a land market in this area. Second, the unique natural endowment of the swamp made its fishery potentials more financially attractive to landlords. The fishponds' most common catch, *hito* and *dalag*,<sup>31</sup> which became rare elsewhere since the 1970s partly due to pesticide-poisoning of rivers and lakes in the country, have a domestic market price higher than beef, and in recent years lucrative markets for these fish have opened abroad. The seven biggest landlords in the contested adjacent areas of about 6,000 hectares, who were all traditionally powerful politically, have business interests beyond these rice farming communities.<sup>32</sup> One measure of their political influence was the fact that these vast rice farming communities were not touched by the Marcos land reform despite a long history of peasant unrest.

Indeed, the plain's natural serenity conceals this history of violent peasant protest. The Candaba swamp had been a hotbed of many uprisings in the past, notably during the 1930s and the subsequent *Huk* rebellion from the 1940s through the late 1950s. *The Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan* (HMB, People's Liberation Army) of the (old) *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP) had Candaba as one of its cradles. Thus, the Candaba swamp is also known as *Huklandia*, and the peasants there are conscious of their history of organized and militant armed struggle. Even with the demise of the HMB-PKP, the peasants, especially in the towns of Candaba and San Luis, have continued to struggle. For instance, they have been able to lower land rents since the 1960s. The villagefolk recall that about 60 comrades have been killed in agrarian-related struggles in Candaba-San Luis communities over the past few decades.<sup>33</sup> But such persistent peasant protests had not yet succeeded in changing the land property relations in their communities until an opening from above emerged around CARP.

Talk about CARP in the late 1980s created an atmosphere of "guarded optimism" among the peasants in the swamp. However, after several years of implementation, there was still no

<sup>29</sup> The empirical data for this case study are drawn mainly from the following sources: a) personal recollection, b) personal interview with a veteran peasant organizer, c) PEACE Foundation (1994,1995) d) internal documents of DKMP, and e) *The Manila Times*.

<sup>30</sup> See Riedinger (1995) in Section 2 of Chapter 2.

<sup>31</sup> Mudfish and catfish, respectively.

<sup>32</sup> The seven biggest landlords were the Aguilar, Arroyo, Canivel, Genuino, Limjoco, Ricafort, and Tecson families (*The Manila Times*, 11 June 1997:1,3). For an study on class, patronage and conflict in this general area, refer to Wolters (1984).

<sup>33</sup> It is also a favorite story by villagefolk how in 1972 they were able to stop a planned permanent, large scale hatchery by one of the landlords. The highlight of the story was on how former President Marcos, who was to lead the groundbreaking ceremonies of the hatchery left the place hastily after feeling the pressure from the peasants. (DKMP,1996).

indication of CARP coverage of the vast tracks of swamp. Unknown to the peasants, who are mostly leaseholders, in 1991 the area's landlords had been able to secure from the DAR regional office deferment permits for their estates on the grounds that the farms were essentially fishponds and not ricefields. The peasants discovered the landlords' scheme only later when, because of the apparent silence from the government about CARP coverage of their communities, they began to mobilize by seeking an audience with local DAR officials.

Learning of the status of their farms and aware of the historical political clout of their landlords, the peasants, used their historical and (some) individual connections with key political organizations to contact the provincial center of PEACE Foundation which was engaged in similar, although smaller, land disputes in adjacent towns. After studying carefully the parameters of their struggle *vis-a-vis* the provisions of the law, the peasants together with their new ally NGO, started to make representations with DAR local and regional offices. But little progress was made in favor of their clamor for land redistribution, since the local DAR personnel were apparently influenced by the powerful landlords and would not clearly respond positively to their counter-claim to subject the land to redistribution.

The change in the national DAR leadership in mid-1992 renewed their hopes, even though their mobilizations did not make much difference during the first year of transition in the DAR bureaucracy. But the delay gave the peasants and their allies needed time to consolidate the separate but adjacent villages into a relatively coherent force. Seasonal farmworkers, both those working for the landlords in the fishponds and for the tenants themselves also became active and conscious participants in these mobilizations. Thus in April 1994, an *ad hoc* organization called *Malayang Magsasaka ng Candaba at San Luis* (MMCSL, Free Farmers of Candaba and San Luis) was formed, composed of both tenants and farmworkers. A series of pickets, dialogues, and street demonstrations were carried out by the peasants at the local as well as the national level of DAR bureaucracies. Their ally NGO provided the substantial portion of logistical needs of these mobilizations, ranging from transportation to food and accommodation costs in Manila. Their allies also mobilized the media to project the local issue as well as facilitated direct interface between the local peasants and proper authorities within the DAR bureaucracy, both at the provincial and national levels.

Such mobilizations brought forward the key features of this specific land dispute, which, in turn, caused a division among the local DAR officials between those who continued to support the deferment permit and others who pushed for immediate expropriation. But the same process led to a concensus position within the new DAR leadership, which might have seen in the Candaba-San Luis case an excellent opportunity to project their commitment to reform. Specifically, the DAR national leadership appeared to realize that with perhaps the same amount of effort and time it would take to move a ten-hectare landholding they would be able to acquire and redistribute 6,000 hectares. A high probability of success became the greatest incentive for the DAR national office to directly and actively intervene in the case.

The positive signal from the DAR national leadership boosted the morale of the pro-reform alliance which had emerged around the Candaba-San Luis community, encouraging the massive entry into the local organization of thousands more tenants and farmworkers who had initially stayed away for fear of reprisal from their landlords.<sup>34</sup> The broadening peasant

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<sup>34</sup> When the Candaba-San Luis peasants began to gain momentum in their mobilizations that straddled from the local to national levels of the DAR, the landlords started to harass the peasants through the use of paramilitary and police forces so that they give up their claim for land redistribution.

participation in the struggle for land, which at this point had already some 3,000 peasants, inspired them to further escalate their collective actions. They started pitching camps in front of DAR offices at the provincial and national levels. These mobilizations began to gain projection in the national media, putting the landlords on the defensive politically.

Finally, in August 1994 the DAR revoked the earlier deferment order, and the DAR Secretary himself led the field investigation team that went to Candaba and San Luis where he ordered the immediate and formal expropriation of about 3,000 hectares through Compulsory Acquisition (CA). In what would be the last attempt to block the reform, the landlords trooped to the DAR regional office in a "fighting mood" when they learned about the reversal of their fate. But when they realized the decisiveness of the pro-reform moves, they backed off and instead shifted strategy by demanding extremely high compensation for their estates. At this point, victory was secured since CARP declares that land redistribution could proceed despite pending protest of landlords over issue of compensation.

The Candaba-San Luis peasants at this point had won only a partial victory because the DAR proved to be willing to cover only 3,000 hectares to benefit around 1,000 peasants (out of around 3,000 potential beneficiaries). Suspecting that either the landlords had been able to manipulate the process or the local DAR offices had been simply extremely inefficient, the peasants and their allies resumed their mobilizations to press for the entire 6,000 hectares and for several more thousand peasants to be included as beneficiaries.<sup>35</sup> Finally, in January 1995 the DAR announced that the impending release of CLOAs for around 6,000 hectares was set for March, pending some technical processes in the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) related to the compensation protest of the landlords.

Despite the DAR's mandate to proceed with land redistribution despite the landlords' compensation protest, the LBP wanted the peasants to continue paying leasehold rentals to the landlords while the land valuation process was going on. Both the DAR and the Candaba-San Luis peasants registered strong protest against the bank's demand, and in a mass assembly of more than 3,000, the peasants resolved not to pay the leasehold rental to the landlord in defiance of the LBP's wishes. Instead, they agreed to deposit money to the LBP not as land rent, but as part of the amortization payment for the land based on their own estimate of at P2,500 (\$100) per hectare per year. The landlords, using local paramilitary and police forces, resumed harassment of the peasants in an effort to force them to submit to the LBP's order. The peasants' demonstrated determination emboldened the DAR to act, and by early February 1995, the DAR quickly moved in and distributed "mother" CLOAs to more than 3,000 peasants covering more than 6,000 hectares of lands. Realizing the unwavering determination not only of the peasants and their allies, but also of the DAR national office to stick to their demands, the LBP, though still confronted by the landlords' protest, finally acquiesced and accepted the peasants' amortization payments.<sup>36</sup>

The peasant-beneficiaries decided to own and operate farms on an individual basis, but opted for collective ownership and operation of the fishery grounds, the more financially lucrative side of their local economy. They also allotted a substantial size of the farm-fishery area for the seasonal farmworkers in the community who, because the leaseholder-claimants were already too numerous (more than 3,000) for the relatively limited size of the estates (around 6,000 hectares) were not included as primary beneficiaries.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Caouette (1996)

<sup>36</sup> PEACE Foundation Program report, 1996.

<sup>37</sup> MMCSL project proposal for rural development, 1997.

In May 1996, President Fidel Ramos visited the community together with several of his Cabinet members and a huge entourage of media people. As expected, the President claimed that Candaba-San Luis was concrete evidence of administration's sincerity in implementing land reform.<sup>38</sup> But the peasants and their allies who knew how the battle was actually won, used the occasion to prepare for the next "battle" for economic and support services from the state. This strategic consideration persuaded the peasants to allow President Ramos to visit their community since, when the DAR secretary asked permission from the peasant organization for such high-level visit, it took the peasants several months to decide. On the one hand, they did not want anyone, especially the President, to steal credit for their victory. On the other, they saw it as an opportunity to make a new set of demands for state support services like credit and infrastructure. After a lively debate, they resolved to strike a balance between the two positions.<sup>39</sup>

#### 5. Case Four: Hacienda Maloles, Sta. Catalina Sur, Candelaria, Quezon<sup>40</sup>

The 243-hectare coconut farmland that used to be owned by the Maloles family in Sta. Catalina Sur, Candelaria, Quezon, is about a 4-hour drive south of Manila. The Manila and United States-based Maloles family also owned a thousand more hectares of coconut- and ricelands in the Luzon provinces of Laguna, Batangas and Nueva Ecija, as well as on the island of Mindoro. The Sta. Catalina Sur farm in Quezon province had 87 tenant-peasant households who, for generations, had labored under a 70-30 sharing arrangement in favor of the landowner. There were also about 200 seasonal farmworkers. Although the farm is mainly planted with coconut trees until today, there is a commercially significant number of *lanzones* trees which also had been subjected to the same sharecropping arrangement.<sup>41</sup>

The Philippines is the world's number one coconut products exporter, cornering about two-thirds of the global market. The main strength of the sector is the extensive character of its production, covering more or less one-third of the country's total cultivated lands. But since world demand has been more for raw and semi-processed coconut products historically, the level of technology in the Philippine coconut industry has remained relatively backward. The entry of competing oil products in the world market, such as palm oil and rape-seeds, since the 1970s negatively impacted on price levels for Philippine coconut exports, while the rise of non-traditional export crops domestically has put new pressure on traditional crops such as coconut -- be they for local or foreign markets. The spatial production expansion of these non-traditional cash crops, characterized by the government as "low volume, high value" crops, has been carried out at the expense of lands planted to the traditional "high volume, low value" crops such as rice, corn and coconut.<sup>42</sup>

During the Marcos regime, the sector became an attractive target of bureaucratic rent-seeking and a bastion of "crony capitalism," especially when Marcos facilitated the emergence of a trading monopoly in this industry. Politically, coconut landlords represent the typical old-type of landlords who did not modernize their farming operations, but persisted in the classic feudal and semi-feudal production relations. It is not surprising also that coconut areas host the most

<sup>38</sup> See headline news and photo of *The Manila Times*, 10 May 1997.

<sup>39</sup> Refer to also to the news feature article published in *The Manila Times*, 11 June 1997.

<sup>40</sup> Data for this case study are drawn primarily from the following sources: a) personal interviews with a senior community organizer directly involved in the case, b) PEACE (1996), c) Coconut Industry Reform Movement (COIR) and KAMMPIL, and d) personal recollection.

<sup>41</sup> Over the past decade, *lanzones* fruit has seen surging domestic market and a potential for export.

<sup>42</sup> About 90 per cent of the Philippine coconut production went to the world market, especially Europe - a situation which put this sector almost wholly dependent on the global market (and at the mercy of world prices fluctuations. (Refer to De la Rosa, 1994).

marginalized peasants in the country, and cradled the 1980s peasant-based communist insurgency. Despite the partial erosion of the political influence of coconut landlords due to the challenge posed by non-traditional cash crops, they remain politically entrenched in the local, if not national polity. This is the structural and institutional context of the Maloles estate case.<sup>43</sup>

In 1991, there were already overt discussions among the peasants in the *hacienda* about the possibility of CARP coverage of the estate. But when a national coconut peasant organization, *Kalipunan ng mga Maliliit na Magniniyog ng Pilipinas* (KAMMPIL, Federation of Small Coconut Peasants) contacted the peasants and tried to agitate them to mobilize for the implementation of CARP in their estate, the Sta. Catalina Sur peasants recoiled, finding the “outsiders” too activist and radical. Having lived in a heavily militarized setting since the town of Candelaria had been the site of violent clashes between the communist-led NPA and government troops, the peasants instead proceeded in a more calculated and cautious way. Contacting the Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO) about their status *vis-a-vis* CARP, they expressed their desire not to own the land, but to effect tenancy reform. This approach is indicative of the deeply-rooted patron-client relationship which prevailed between them and their landlord. “*Nakakahiya naman sa may-ari, mababait naman sila* (It is a shame to opt for redistribution because our landlords are very kind),” was the common reasoning among the villagefolk.<sup>44</sup> However, this impression about their landlord was soon shattered when the latter vehemently objected to any shift from sharecropping to leasehold system, leading to an escalation of the conflict.

During the 1992-1993 period, the MARO was able to convince the peasants to opt for land redistribution under compulsory acquisition instead of leasehold. Coming from a government official, the suggestion was readily accepted by the peasants, and an especially long and complicated process of CA began with the peasants advised to just wait and trust the work of the MARO. The peasants subsequently formed their own organization, the *Manggagawang Nagkakaisa sa Hacienda* (MANAH, United Workers in Hacienda) which included both tenants and farmworkers, in anticipation of land reform implementation. While it appeared that implementation was underway, they discovered later that the MARO’s move had been part of the landlord’s scheme to evade the reform through a well-calculated tactic of delaying the process. The initial trust given by the peasants to the MARO had given the landlord enough time to secure a permit from the provincial branch of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), a government agency, to cut down the coconut trees on the farm. The landlord’s plan, it was later learned, was to clear the estate of its coconut trees and declare it as either non-agricultural land or a commercial farm with the remaining *lanzones* trees. In either scenario, the goal was to make it appear that there were no tenants on the estate. Under the law, cutting more than three coconut trees requires an official permit from the PCA based on several reasons. The landlord claimed that the trees were already very old and no longer economically productive, which is a sufficient ground for tree-cutting under the law. However, the PCA field officer who conducted the requisite investigation, did not find the landlord’s claim valid, and so recommended that the

<sup>43</sup>See De la Rosa (1994) for an analyses of global and European markets and how other oil-based crops elsewhere have become competitors of the Philippine coconut; for an interesting analysis of production and exchange relations, refer to Boyce (1992); for a background information regarding the controversial coconut levy imposed upon the peasants during the trading monopoly under Marcos, see COIR (1996); for an interesting analysis about the coconut peasants’ role in peasant-based insurgency, see Hawes (1990); and for an overview of a coconut peasant movement, refer to KAMMPIL (1997). Refer also to Rossel (1996) for his analysis of a typical political economy of a coconut area in Quezon province (specifically, Bondoc peninsula) framed in the context of a foreign development project intervention.

<sup>44</sup>This was the same attitude demonstrated by *sitio* Poultry peasants (*i.e.* resumption of tenancy arrangement was the original demand). Some scholars explain that such peasants’ “ambivalence” toward redistributive reform can be attributed to prevailing local and “social security network” of peasants that include landlords. Access to land, for many peasants, may not always mean individualized land redistribution. Refer to an interesting recent article by Hirtz (1997).

landlord's application be rejected. Despite this, the PCA director gave the landowner the permit to cut down all the trees, disregarding his own officer's field investigation and recommendation.

Massive tree cutting began in 1994, pushing the peasants to take a different tactical focus with a new sense of urgency: to stop the tree cutting. Feeling they were losing the battle, the peasants this time initiated contact with the nearby branch of KAMMPIL, and requested assistance. When the coconut clearing began to gain momentum, the collective action of the peasants took a dramatic form: the peasants embraced the coconut trees while the chainsaw-wielding estate workers were trying to cut them down. Before the landlord could cut trees beyond the already cleared two hectares, the peasants were able to mobilize more allies to help them put a stop to the scheme.

In particular, while KAMMPIL had mobilized its own network of national NGOs and supporters in the media in support of the Maloles peasants, it also had facilitated the elevation of the local struggle to the national PCA office, with which it had previously forged an alliance in relation to numerous other coconut peasant struggles in the country. The national PCA administrator, Virgilio David, and several top officials from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) immediately flew by helicopter to the village in May 1994 and landed in the Maloles estate that had been barricaded by hundreds of peasants.<sup>45</sup> PCA Administrator David and his team then conducted an on-the-spot investigation of the farm and concluded that the landlord's claims about the *hacienda* were all false. After ordering the tree-cutting to stop he also immediately relieved the PCA director of his post, replacing him with a PCA provincial staff recommended by the peasants. The convergence of these different actors against the coconut tree-cutting and subsequent national projection of the conflict in the media put the landlord in a very defensive position, while government bureaucrats in the local DAR and PCA offices who had earlier supported him were neutralized, greatly increasing the strength of the pro-reform forces going into the next stage of the struggle.<sup>46</sup>

The battle thus shifted back to the question of land reform. The peasants were confronted by a divided local DAR office. The municipal head was still, albeit more cautiously, favoring the landlord through different delaying tactics, but another MARO employee was actively supporting the peasants, joining even in tacticizing sessions and divulging important information related to the case. But the impact of the earlier victory against the evasion maneuver of the landlord was so great that the momentum was clearly on the side of the peasants. Even so, they continued to pressure the DAR to act swiftly by picketing the local offices, while their allies were pressuring the DAR national headquarters to intervene for faster land redistribution. Finally, a "mother" CLOA for 198 hectares was released. The landlords were able to get 45 hectares for their retention rights (for the five siblings of the Maloles family and other qualified beneficiaries of the landowning party). There were two types of beneficiaries: primary - the 87 tenants, and secondary - the farmworkers. The redistributed land per beneficiary is not in fact big, but it ensures that the farmworkers themselves get their own piece of land. The tedious process of individual titling is still going on as of this writing.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Virgilio David is a former military general in the Armed Forces of the Philippines and an ardent advocate of liberal approach to land reform.

<sup>46</sup> In fact, the conflict was even projected internationally (at least within broad NGO networks) since two German activists working with the Foodfirst International Action Network (FIAN) based in Heidelberg, Germany visited the Maloles estate at the height of these protests (the visit was facilitated by COIR). FIAN then made a widespread information dissemination campaign to support the peasants' struggle for land in Maloles, and launched a letter-writing campaign to the Philippine government to immediately resolve the case in favor of the peasants. (Source: Personal communication with the executive director of COIR, 20 September 1997, Zurich, Switzerland.)

<sup>47</sup> Personal interviews with a senior community organizer of KAMMPIL, June-July 1997, Amsterdam.



The story of the victorious peasant struggle in Sta. Catalina Sur reached other peasants in several more Maloles-owned estates in other provinces through the national media news and NGO networks. Meanwhile, the DAR national office has prevented the Maloles family from availing of any retention rights in their other estates. Through the combined initiatives of the DAR national office and various local and national NGOs, a Maloles estates-wide peasant conference was held in February 1997 to share experiences and to coordinate in the ongoing campaign to expropriate the remaining Maloles estates.<sup>48</sup>

#### 6. Case Five: Greenfields Estate, Barangays Bukal and Maunong, Calamba, Laguna<sup>49</sup>

Unlike the first four stories, the Greenfields case pitted the peasants against a powerful real estate corporation. Owned by Marcos crony and real estate developer Jose Yao Campos who is majority stockholder of the Greenfields Development Corporation, the 215 hectare Greenfields estate is located in the foothills of Mt. Makiling in *barangays* Bukal and Manunong, Calamba, Laguna, about an hour drive south of Manila. The contested estate is at the heart of one of the country's fastest developing and urbanizing areas, where a phenomenal real estate boom inspired by the government's priority development plan for Southern Tagalog, the CALABARZON project, is underway, which aims to attract massive foreign investments.<sup>50</sup> Residential subdivisions, commercial-industrial complexes, and luxurious tourism enclaves began to mushroom around this particular geographic location since the 1980s at the expense of agricultural lands, which have been indiscriminately converted into non-farm uses. Speculative investments have marked the land market boom in the area, where a hectare of land can fetch as high as P5 million (\$200,000). At the same time, Mt. Makiling was declared by the government as an ecologically endangered zone as a way to discourage upland farming. But the state's environmental concern never flourished under the weight of foreign investments, which the government has identified as key to the country's development, provoking from time to time intra-state institutional and policy conflicts. As explained in Chapter 2, the construction sector has provided the main boost to the national economy's recent growth rates, in turn increasing the real estate sector's political influence. It is in this particular structural and institutional setting that the Greenfields land reform conflict is located.<sup>51</sup>

Many of the more or less 200 tenants have been cultivating farms at Greenfields since the 1940s, producing rainfed rice, corn, rootcrops, fruits and vegetables. The landlord, Jose Campos, started to buy lands in *barangays* Bukal and Maunong in 1965 and to plant them to sugarcane. The peasants in the conflict were the same tenants of former landowners from whom the new owner purchased the lands. They worked as farmworkers in the sugarcane farm now owned by Campos, while they were allowed to farm for food crops in the steeper portions of the property rent-free.<sup>52</sup> The rent-free arrangement was a good reason for the peasants to feel profound *utang na loob* or "debt of gratitude" toward their absentee-landlord. However, the same rent-free set-up in the farm made the "tenurial relationship" between the peasants and the landlord vague and would prove difficult to establish at a future time when such a relationship had to be legally clarified. This arrangement prevailed from the 1960s through the 1980s.

<sup>48</sup> Personal interviews with a senior community organizer of KAMMPIL, June-July 1997, Amsterdam.

<sup>49</sup> Data for this case study are taken principally from the following sources: a) personal recollection, b) PEACE (1995,1996), c) DKMP (1996), personal interviews with a veteran CPP cadre (Paris, April 1997), and a community organizer of PEACE (June 1997, Utrecht).

<sup>50</sup> CALABARZON stands for the Southern Tagalog (south of Manila) provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon. Hatched by the Aquino administration, the plan was developed by the Ramos government. The investors coming in are mainly Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese.

<sup>51</sup> For an interesting study about the land market in the general area of Laguna, refer to CPDS (1996).

<sup>52</sup> One of the former landowners from whom Campos bought lands became the latter's overseer.



But after losing his traditional patron “at the top” when Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown in 1986, Campos virtually abandoned his Bukal-Maunong property, as well as his other sugarcane lands elsewhere in the province.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCCG), the body tasked by the new Aquino government to retrieve the “ill-gotten wealth” of Marcos and his cronies, was supposed to have sequestered all of Campos’ estates on the grounds that they were actually Marcos’. But there was no official word about the sequestration of the Bukal-Maunong property, although in 1990 the peasants began to hear conflicting stories that Campos had either sold his property or ceded it to the government. Then in 1991, the peasants discovered that Campos still owned the land and that he was planning to develop it into a resort in a joint venture with Taiwanese investors. Concerned about their fate, they sought the help of their *barangay captain* (village chief) and *Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee* (BARC) chairperson, but these officials seemed to be indifferent in their inquiry. Unknown to the farmers then, the BARC chairperson in particular, an employee of the Greenfields Development Corporation, had earlier issued an official certification to the Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO) stating that there were no farmers or tenants on the property, in an apparent move on behalf of the landlord. Predictably, when the Greenfields tenants elevated their inquiry to the municipal DAR office (MARO), the latter quickly decided to exclude the estate from CARP on the grounds that it was “untenanted.” In addition, the MARO declared that there was no evidence of any agricultural activity in the area and that the land had an eighteen degrees slope.<sup>54</sup> By early 1992, GDC bulldozers entered the community to start the development project, uprooting the tenants’ crops and paving the way for a complex dispute that would involve a constellation of state and societal actors far beyond the isolated communities of Bukal and Maunong.

The general feeling of tactical defeat pushed the peasants to search for allies. An immediately accessible one was a well-known leader of a (politically moderate) national peasant organization who lived in a nearby town, and was a member of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Committee (PARC), the national multisectoral body headed by the Philippine President and tasked to oversee the overall implementation of CARP. This well-connected peasant leader helped the peasants to form their own local organization and invited them to join his national organization. He also made several representations before the DAR and DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) on behalf of the peasants, which resulted in several field inspections by different agencies. But all these investigations came to the same conclusion that had been rendered earlier by the MARO about the “non-CARPability” of the estate.

In September 1993, the DAR national office signed the CARP exemption permit for the 215 hectare-estate of the corporation, but stipulated that a mere thirteen hectares be redistributed to the farmers because these were the only portion planted to sugarcane. Dissatisfied by the decision, the peasants moved for reconsideration, but failed to reverse the decision despite the testimony of the landlord’s former overseer who declared that the reason why the government investigation teams saw no crops in the community was because they had been forcibly uprooted by company guards in early 1992. Although the same overseer, who had been fired by the landlord when the development project began, recounted how he had managed the sugarcane plantation together with the tenants and how he had been instructed by Campos decades ago that peasants farming outside the sugarcane should not be asked to give land rent, the DAR national

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<sup>53</sup> He also owned the estate in Mamplasan, Binan (Laguna) that was land occupied by local KMP organization during the second half of the 1980s.

<sup>54</sup> Under CARP, undeveloped lands with eighteen degrees slope are excluded from land reform.

office reaffirmed its earlier decision to exempt the estate from reform in May 1994. At the same time, the peasants learned that the thirteen hectares slated for redistribution had been awarded not to them, but to the peasant leader from whom they earlier had sought assistance.

Feeling betrayed, the majority of the peasants rejected the so-called “compromise deal,” and bolted from the organization affiliated with the said peasant leader. Seeking new allies,<sup>55</sup> they contacted a regional-based peasant organization and an NGO with regional offices in Los Banos, a town near the *barangays* Bukal and Maunong. The *Alyansa para sa Tunay na Repormang Agraryo sa Timog Katagalugan* (ARARO, Alliance for Genuine Agrarian Reform in Southern Tagalog), which is the regional chapter of DKMP, and the local center PEACE Foundation, mobilized their networks at the provincial and regional levels, but most especially at the national level in support of the peasants’ claim for redistribution of the entire estate.

Immediately after this new alliance was forged, more than two hundred peasants began to mobilize, pressuring the provincial DAR office to reopen the case. During the annual government celebration of CARP anniversary in June, the peasants marched to Metro Manila and pitched camp before the DAR national office for a few days to press for their demands. They were joined by several hundreds more of peasants from different parts of the country who were engaged in similar land disputes which were also coordinated by the same network of NGOs and peasant organizations now assisting the Greenfields peasants. These mobilizations were widely covered by the national media. Under such pressure, the DAR national office promised to expedite the case. The peasants also trooped to the nearby national office of the DENR, demanding that it withdraw its earlier decision about the “non-CARPability” of their farm. After returning to Laguna, the peasants then proceeded to pitch camp in front of the Campos estate and the Greenfields Subdivision gate (owned by the same corporation) to prevent further bulldozing of the contested land. Violence erupted when GDC guards and local policemen forcibly dismantled the tents, and made threatening remarks while brandishing their guns at the farmers. As a result of the protest, the entire community became heavily militarized, with about a hundred armed guards hired by the corporation roaming around and harassing the peasants. Within a few days, several DENR and DAR officials arrived in the area to investigate, bringing with them department officials from the regional down to the municipal level. At the end of June, the two agencies reaffirmed the earlier decisions about the “non-CARPability” of the estate for the third time.

Then, just when the case appeared to have decisively closed against the peasants, a company guard and his policeman brother stabbed to death one of the leaders of the peasant protest in early July. Immediately after the slain man was buried, the group again went to the national capital and pitched camp in front of the DAR national office, now more determined than ever to press for the land and for justice for their slain leader. They also marched to the infamous Mendiola Bridge leading to *Malacanang* Palace with a mock coffin to call the attention of President Ramos to their plight. The killing of the peasant leader had focused national attention on the Maunong-Bukal case, and put the DAR and DENR national offices, the corporation, and the peasant leader who had brokered the discredited “compromise deal” all under the spotlight of a public inquiry.

Fearing the growing media exposure of the controversy, the corporation and the DAR national office initiated a series of low profile dialogues with the peasants, initially led by the DAR

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<sup>55</sup> The peasant leader who was tasked to manage the redistribution of the awarded portion of the estate was questioned by majority of the peasants on the grounds of transparency of transactions with the DAR and GDC especially since only a few were bound to benefit from the said deal.

secretary himself. Later, influential national NGO activists came in to help in the mediation sessions. In these dialogues, which took five “marathon sessions,” three peasant groups emerged: the ARARO-TK/DKMP affiliated group, a smaller group associated with the peasant leader who had brokered the earlier compromise deal, and the smallest group which belonged to neither of the first two but were also part of the peasant community in the estate. The ARARO-TK/DKMP group, already convinced that land redistribution was impossible given all the factors involved, put forward a set of demands which they hoped would be the starting point of the dialogue: recognition of their right to till another 50 hectares within the estate for 10 to 15 years, and homelots totalling 10 hectares. Unsurprisingly, the corporation would not agree to this, and several rounds of mediation, involving various actors and channels of communications,<sup>56</sup> occurred without a resolution to the conflict.

During the fourth round of dialogue, three sets of demands from three different peasant groups had emerged: ARARO-TK/DKMP peasants pushed for *farmlots plus homelots*, the second group demanded *homelots plus* community service infrastructures (e.g. road), while the last group put forward a demand for *homelots only*. At this point, the position of the corporation was that it was open to discussing giving homelots, but never farmlots.<sup>57</sup> During the fifth and last round of dialogue, in September 1994, the corporation finally offered the peasants 100 square meter homelot with legal titles for each family, installation of water and electrical facilities, construction of concrete road connecting the community to the main road outside, construction of community center, and P7 million (almost \$300,000) cash to enable the peasants to buy farmlots in nearby towns or to start their own socio-economic project. The three groups agreed to the compromise deal. Several months later, many of the peasants were able to buy farmlots in a nearby town producing rice and vegetable while having their homelots in the original community.<sup>58</sup>

## 7. Summary and Conclusion

As demonstrated above, highly contentious private estates were expropriated by the state and redistributed to the peasants, and although the fifth case of Greenfields did not result in expropriation of the Campos land, the peasants there were able to clinch substantial concessions from the landlord which enabled them to purchase farmlands outside the contested estate. Below is a brief summary of the differences and similarities of the five cases along the four factors set out in this study.

The structural and institutional setting of each disputed estate was distinct from each other although common to all was the presence of politically and economically powerful landlords despite diversity in the type of economic activity in each farm. Stanfilco represents the most modern type of capitalist farm, while *Hacienda Maloles* typifies the classic traditional and feudal production relations. *Sitio* Poultry and Candaba-San Luis fall in between these two types -- that is, while these two farms were engaged in high-value crops and products (mango and fish, respectively), the principal relations of production remained largely non-capitalist, i.e. sharecropping and leasehold, respectively. Candaba-San Luis stands out from the rest of the cases because of its dual character as riceland and fishery ground. The Greenfields case is also different from the other four stories mainly because of the encroachment of non-agricultural (real estate)

<sup>56</sup> Behind the scene, various “back-door” negotiations were simultaneously happening that involved different types of social and political relationships such as GDC and NGO people who were in the same university fraternity.

<sup>57</sup> The GDC also offered the peasants employment in the bulldozing of their farms.

<sup>58</sup> Personal interviews with two informants (Netherlands, 1997)

interests onto the contested land. In all cases, the prior distribution of political power was highly skewed in favor of the landlords. But as demonstrated in four cases, the landlords were all expropriated in the end, while in the Greenfields case the landlord was forced to give important concessions to the peasants. Overcoming the structural and institutional obstacles entailed a positive interaction between social mobilizations from below and reformist initiatives from above that surpassed the power of the landlords to evade land reform.

In all cases, local peasant groups linked up with external allies after realizing that the struggle for land required mobilization beyond the municipal level. The case studies also show that national or regional peasant organizations (or leaders of these organizations) and NGOs are the most common allies of local peasant groups, although in the case of Stanfilco, the expropriated landowner became the unexpected ally of the farmworkers against a multinational company. In all the cases, allies provided the necessary logistical and political resources needed to extend the reach and increase the impact of their local mobilizations. The cases of Stanfilco and Greenfields also revealed the possibility of divisions among the subaltern groups of peasants and farmworkers. In these two cases, initial mobilizations and agreements with the state and landlord (and company) excluded and dissatisfied others, who later countermobilized.

The five cases have also revealed that local DAR and other government officials prior to 1992 generally moved in favor of the landlords, and all five cases showed that the landlords in fact had been initially successful in evading the reform. But since the new DAR leadership assumed authority within the agency, many of these officials either were neutralized or converted to reformism (although some were still clearly pro-landlord as in the case of Maloles), and earlier decisions favoring landlords were recalled. But while pro-active reformist initiatives were not exactly a strong point among the local DAR officials who demonstrated an attitude to wait for the top level intervention before they move, the general active reformist interventions of the top DAR officials were not always fair to the peasants such as the earlier decisions in Stanfilco.

Moreover, especially prior to 1992, few local DAR officials were supportive of the local peasants' demands for land reform. Only when the external allies of peasants came into the picture and helped to elevate and escalate the degree and level of mobilization did some of these local officials begin to cooperate with the local peasant groups. The direct intervention of top DAR officials also proved crucial in making the local bureaucracy officials actively supportive and interactive with the peasant groups. The positive interaction between peasant groups and government officials were achieved through different levels of intervention by both state and peasant allies' initiatives. This interaction greatly increased the power of pro-reform forces.

In all cases, the landlords tried to evade land reform by deceiving and coercing local peasant groups and by conniving with local DAR officials. As soon as the pro-reform forces increased their mobilizations, the landlords reacted with greater countermobilization beyond the village, and sometimes went beyond legal parameters, as in the cases where harassment was used to intimidate the peasants. In the first four cases, the pro-reform alliance clearly overpowered the landlords, but in the fifth case of Greenfields, the efforts of the pro-reform alliance were not sufficient to guarantee expropriation of the contested estate, though they were enough to clinch substantial concessions from the landlord.

In summary, the case studies demonstrated that landlords resisted land reform and were initially successful in evading it by deceiving or coercing the peasants and at the same time by

conniving with local DAR officials. It took a series of escalating mobilizations by pro-reform forces to frustrate these landlords' schemes and to finally secure land redistribution. The state allies within the local and national bureaucracy, which came to dominate the DAR leadership beginning in 1992, and the subsequent positive interaction between them and the pro-reform societal actors from below proved to be crucial in reversing previous and blocking subsequent evasive schemes of the landlords. However, the mere occurrence of positive interactions between state and societal pro-reform forces did not automatically lead to expropriation of private estates. The failure of the landlord to match the level of strength mustered by the pro-reform state and societal forces, or the capacity of the pro-reform forces to surpass the landlord's resistance, paved the way for the state's expropriation of the contested estate and redistribute them to peasants.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE *BIBINGKA* STRATEGY TO LAND REFORM IMPLEMENTATION: LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study about successful implementation of land reform in highly contentious private landholdings in the Philippines suggests that the roots of the persistent land reform “chicken and egg” policy dilemma are not as structurally “fixed” as is usually assumed by many activist and academic observers alike. The main lesson drawn from this research is that the outcomes of land reform policy are not determined by either structural or institutional factors alone, or by the actions of state elites alone, but that the political actions and strategies of a wide range of state and societal actors also matter for the outcomes of the reform process. The symbiotic interaction between autonomous societal groups from below and strategically placed state reformists from above provides the most promising strategy to offset strong landlord resistance to land reform, making possible state expropriation and redistribution of highly contentious private estates to previously landless and near-landless peasants.

The evidence provided by the hard-earned success stories in this study challenges a basic dichotomy in the literature between state-centered and society-centered explanations of land reform policy outcomes. State-centered approaches appropriately raise the importance of state action from above, but tend to overlook the structural and institutional obstacles or constraints that often undermine and derail reformist projects by the state. Society-centered approaches often correctly identify key structural and institutional obstacles to reform, but usually fail to recognize how political action and conflict can under certain conditions overcome those obstacles. Fox’s interactive approach to state-society relations in using state and societal actors as the main units of analysis, has helped to show how in the process of a redistributive policy implementation process fraught with conflict these key actors were themselves transformed, and in emphasizing how changes in the balance of power within the state dynamically interacted with shifting alignments of forces in society.

A short summary discussion of the structural and institutional settings and the roles they played will be provided below before outlining the findings and conclusions of this study based on the four interrelated factors.

#### **1. Structures and institutions**

Philippine land reform policy implementation in the 1980s and 1990s has faced serious structural and institutional obstacles and constraints within the changed international and national contexts. With the country remaining predominantly agrarian which is saddled by a huge external foreign debt, the post-Marcos governments have embarked on a fast-track industrial project drawing inspiration from its newly-industrializing Asian neighbors. The neoliberal imperatives have pushed the Aquino and Ramos administrations to adopt a three-pronged industrial development strategy banking on foreign direct investments, foreign exchange remittances of overseas Filipinos, and low volume, high value dollar-earning section of the country’s agriculture. Although it has undeniably made significant progress along this overarching strategy, the source of recent economic growth rates has been confined in the highly speculative investments, such as finance and real estate, which have already shown some evidence of “overheating.” And founded on a highly inequitable distribution of economic and political resources, the modest benefits

derived from the current development achievements have been largely restricted to the economic elites.

The structural changes in economy have only partially altered the institutional make-up of the country. The transition from authoritarian to a national electoral regime in 1986 did not lead to complete democratization of the countryside, since entrenched political elites continue to dominate the rural polity today. But in recent years there has been a partial erosion of these authoritarian rural enclaves, in a political process which can be traced back to the series of highly constrained elections held during and immediately after the period of authoritarian rule. Although the Philippine countryside continues to be dominated by the traditional type of landlords, the twin developments of gradual decline in economic importance of high volume, low value crops on the one hand, and the rise of low volume, high value sector of the agriculture has given the new type of entrepreneurial landlords more political influence. However, both have continued to employ traditional methods of political subordination of the majority of poor rural citizens such as perpetuation of patron-client ties and actual use or threat of violence.

It is in this structural and institutional setting that CARP was born. It was conceived by different, often conflicting, "mother" agendas by a constellation of actors: economic instrument for greater capital accumulation drive, preemptive reform in response to widespread dissent by the citizenry, anti-poverty program, electoral expediency as the rural areas have remain to be the chief source of "captive votes," or political legitimacy tool. CARP's implementation has continuously and necessarily been marked by the varying combination of these complex agendas and motivations by state and society actors who are all embedded in the structures and institutions of the Philippine society.

Locally, structural and institutional factors play an important role in determining the character of land struggles, but as the five case studies here have demonstrated the outcomes of these conflicts are not determined by such factors alone. The implication of emphasizing the roles of structures and institutions alone in determining land reform policy outcomes is that it leads to the belief that the kinds of landholdings most vulnerable to land reform are croplands characterized by high volume, low value products such as coconut, rice and corn where traditional type of landlords have already been weakened politically both by the global and national structural and institutional changes over time and the past reform cycles. But this proved to be true in only one of the five cases examined here, that of the Maloles coconut estate, and in this case, closer examination of the actual process shows that expropriation was not automatic, but involved political conflict and struggle. It was a hard-won, not easy success. As the three other cases of Stanfilco, Candaba-San Luis and *sitio* Poultry show, landholdings owned and controlled by the broadly new type of landlord engaged in low volume, high value crops were also expropriated, but again, expropriation did not occur automatically, but came as a result of political conflict and struggle. Meanwhile, Greenfields Corporations successfully evaded land reform, but was forced by the persistent pressure mounted by the pro-reform forces both within the state and in society to give substantial socio-economic concessions to the peasants, which in the end enabled the peasants to purchase their own farm plots.

The five cases revealed the great diversity of societal institutional entities and relationships which may become relevant to the implementation process. Most critical land reform advocates tend to focus their analyses on only those social institutions and relationships which reinforce landlord power. Such institutions and relationships were certainly operative in the cases



examined here. For example, in all the communities studied here -- except perhaps in Greenfields where the landlord was absent for decades and in Stanfilco where the central land conflict was between the farmworkers and the company (and not the landlord, who even came out on the side of the farmworkers) -- patron-client ties between landlords and peasants were very pronounced. But closer examination of the cases reveals other social institutions and relationships which, while they do not automatically undermine landlord power, can be mobilized to counteract landlord power. For example, in two cases (Candaba-San Luis and Stanfilco) there were recent traditions of autonomous local organizational experience, but in the other cases, there was no evidence of prior autonomous mass organizing work, although in the course of local peasant mobilizations for land reform (in all five cases), external allies came in and provided political and logistical resources necessary for the extension of the reach of peasant mobilizations.

## **2. Social Mobilization From Below**

At the national-level, autonomous peasant movements and NGOs from across the political spectrum began to involve themselves in CARP implementation in 1992 after previously campaigning actively for the rejection of CARP. This change in attitude toward CARP was influenced by a confluence of events. First, in 1992 a reformist leadership took over DAR which sought allies from autonomous peasant movements and NGOs to implement land reform. Second, the 1993 split in the communist-led ND political bloc which traditionally dominated the peasant movement paved the way for the development of a more pluralist coalition of autonomous peasant organizations that included left and center-left political streams. Third, the general failure of alternative routes to land reform such as KMP's earlier land occupation campaigns and the CPP's agrarian revolution steered the ND peasant activists toward a more pragmatic and realistic approach. Finally, the global and national neoliberal political-economic changes which reinvigorated the "land reform avoidance" policy currents operative in "modest advances (fifth) current" settings also worked to transform the perception of CARP from a conservative to a liberal-progressive policy. In short, the bleak prospects for radical versions of agrarian reform at the current global and national contexts rendered CARP the most realistic and viable vehicle for land reform in the Philippines.

This confluence of events paved the way for a vibrant, pluralist and autonomous social mobilization from below that engaged the state, seizing every political opportunity that came their way and pushing open even more the initial and partial opening of access routes to state power. In contrast to the pre-1992 type of autonomous peasant mobilization, the post-1992 social mobilizations simultaneously occurred in different arenas, levels, and forms of conflict and struggle: from national down to local, from legal to "extra-legal," from broad, strategic policy reform-oriented mobilizations to tactical, immediate goals-driven actions. The new constellation of autonomous societal actors at the national level was crucial in providing the necessary support for actual, local-level struggles for land.

At the local level, whether or not autonomous peasant organizations were present, peasant communities mobilized for land. Peasants mobilized for land redistribution upon realization of their collective identity as potential beneficiaries and the perception that they could get the land through collective action. But the five cases also showed that local peasant collective actions were not necessarily quickly achieved since important structural and institutional factors, such as entrenched patron-client ties and actual use or threat of violence by the state and landlords, tended to inhibit peasants from undertaking collective action. Two cases (*sitio* Poultry and

Maloles) in fact demonstrated the initial preferred option of the peasants to either simply resume the old tenancy arrangement, as in the case of *sitio* Poultry, or effect a tenancy reform, as in the case of Maloles.

Peasant mobilization, which in the five case studies took a variety of forms, is a necessary but not sufficient requisite for land reform implementation in highly contested lands. In five case studies, local peasant communities mobilized to get land, but at least initially their mobilizations were often confined at the municipal level at the most, while the landlords' schemes to evade reform went beyond the village and municipal levels. For this reason, the peasants needed (and sought) external allies, as demonstrated in all the cases, in order to extend the reach of their political mobilization. In this study, the most notable allies were provincial and local NGOs, and national peasant organizations (or leaders of peasant organizations), which provided the necessary political and logistical support otherwise inaccessible and unaffordable to local peasant groups. The media usually came into the picture later, as they are normally based in important urban centers and were contacted by the peasants' allies only when the mobilization began to escalate. Though important, the role of national political organizations in this process was not very apparent, perhaps because they usually operate through the NGOs and peasant organizations.<sup>1</sup>

When mobilizations began to transcend local boundaries, the NGO and peasant organization allies were of greatest help in terms of providing necessary political and logistical support. They facilitated the interface between the village peasants and provincial-national authorities with whom they had earlier forged alliances. This gave the peasants direct access to proper pressure points and state allies. Also material resources, the absence of which would have had otherwise been a major handicap to peasant mobilizations, were provided by these allies: transportations costs, accommodation expenses at the national capital city during several days of sustained lobbying, public information materials, legal advice and aid, and facilitation of contact with media. The most important contribution of the media, as far as all the cases in this paper are concerned, was in putting the anti-land reform forces on the defensive, and in preventing any further eruption or escalation of violence against the peasants.

In assisting local peasant groups, allies are driven by ideological, political, institutional and even personal and material motivations and agendas, which have a profound impact on how they view the terms of relationship with the peasants and how they try to influence the character, conduct and direction of peasant collective actions. Fox (1992b) is correct in arguing that the peasants are not really wary of having allies *per se*; they are wary about the *terms* of the relationship - an insight validated in most of the case studies here but most apparent in the cases of Maloles, Stanfilco and Greenfields.

Finally, an inclusive approach to organizing and mobilization proved to be the most effective way not only to cement the local peasant movement, but to ensure that the eventual gain (that is, land) would be redistributed democratically. The initial "top-down" method of organizing in Stanfilco and Greenfields indeed excluded some of the members of the community. This exclusion triggered countermobilizations from those excluded and dissatisfied which was both good, in the sense that the countermobilizations resulted in inclusive settlement of the conflict, and bad, since it weakened the peasant groups relative to their adversaries. An inclusive approach to land reform mobilization also ensured that the traditionally left out seasonal farmworkers were

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<sup>1</sup> In the cases of Maloles and *sitio* Poultry high profile intervention of pro-reform international groups played important roles too.

in the end able to avail of the benefits of land reform as in the cases of Candaba-San Luis and Maloles.

In summary, in all five cases, local peasant mobilization was necessary, but alone would have had limited impact. External allies, who were usually NGOs and peasant organizations, provided the much needed political and logistical resources necessary to extend the reach of peasant mobilizations. But while such a combined force increased the impact of social pressure from below to implement land reform, it could not have had secured victories without reformist openings from above.

### **3. Pro-reform Initiatives From Above**

Prior to 1992, the DAR was controlled by advocates of conservative reforms who opted to work with traditional and state co-opted peasant organizations rather than autonomous societal movements. The CARP implementation during this period was slow, limited, and mainly focused on the less contentious components of the program. Widespread evasions and scandalous real estate speculations by landlords using the loopholes in CARP particularly marked this period.

The appointment of Ernesto Garilao as DAR secretary in 1992 ushered in an era of reformism within a bureaucracy. Since 1992, the number of reform-oriented officials and employees within DAR has grown steadily, neutralizing if not undermining the corrupt and anti-land reform employees found within the bureaucracy. The state reformists within the DAR were strategically located spatially and politically. Their spatial location was strategic in the sense that they were able to control key bureaus from top to bottom within the department most responsible for land reform implementation. Their political location was strategic in the sense that the DAR leadership was often able to neutralize if not defeat recurring attempts by anti-land reform state actors to undermine the land reform policy. Garilao's appointment as the government's "anti-poverty chief" further strengthened the pro-reform current within the administration *vis-a-vis* its "land reform avoidance" policy current. The emergence of other pro-(land)reform state actors in other departments of the executive branch (*e.g.* PCA, DENR) further strategically positioned the pro-reform forces within the state. But, these state reformists, who are driven by principal concern on political legitimacy, were constantly challenged by anti-reform state actors who were primarily concerned with private capital accumulation. There were several cases when the pro-reform forces triumphed over these anti-reform forces, but there were some cases too when the power of the anti-reform coalition proved too great, and as a result pro-reform actors lost tactical battles. These state reformists initiated the opening up of access routes to state power for autonomous societal actors to traverse. They also created political opportunity spaces for the previously excluded subaltern societal actors to occupy. Finally, the emergence of state reformists at the top level of DAR generated important rippling effects down to the local levels where the main conflicts were being fought.

At the local level, the picture looks a bit different primarily because the political landscape locally is much more hostile to state actors tasked to implement land reform. Prior to the reformist penetration of the DAR in 1992, the local level officials and employees were generally supportive of, coerced to submit to, or silent about landlords' evasive tactics to land reform. In fact, all the five cases in this study showed that landlords secured initial successes in evading the reform. and that these evasive moves were made mainly in collusion with DAR officials, locally and beyond. This situation changed after 1992.

In broad terms, three categories of local DAR officials were observable from the local cases examined in this study: anti-reform, “fence-sitters,” and active pro-reform. The most numerous type of anti-reform officials were largely neutralized after 1992, while many from the fence-sitters were converted to reformism and joined the few number of reformist officials and employees. Such turn-arounds were promoted among the top level DAR reformists mainly by subjecting them to a constant interface with autonomous societal groups from below. But even after the consolidation of state reformists within the DAR national office, the local DAR officials and employees’ attitude toward land reform implementation was more “reactive” than pro-active. This can be explained by their location in the rural political landscape.

Most of these local DAR officials live and work in the local communities which are also the bastion of political power of the landlords. Most of them were able to secure jobs within the bureaucracy through the system of political patronage where the landlords are one key actor. The pressure on these local officials was therefore tremendous, a constraint not exactly felt by the relatively autonomous higher DAR officials who do not have to worry about daily pressures and harassments from the landlords. These local officials, however, can become active pro-land reform advocates when there is a strong social mobilization from below although the presence of such does not automatically make them supportive of the peasants. They have to know if the societal actors from below have direct contact with their higher officials before they normally act in support of such pro-reform actions. Thus direct intervention and support by top level DAR officials works to make local employees more attentive and active toward land reform implementation, and more willing to take the risk of confronting a powerful landlord. The regular direct interfaces between local DAR officials and societal actors facilitated and mediated by national level coalitions of pro-reform state and societal actors thus encouraged local DAR officials to move in favor of land reform.

In summary, state reformists within the DAR were strategically located spatially and politically. But while pro-active reformist initiatives characterized the top level leadership of DAR, the local level bureaucracy was generally reactive and needed direct intervention from the top and social pressure from below. The mutual interaction between state and societal pro-reform forces is important in strengthening each other as will be discussed below.

#### **4. Symbiotic Interaction Between State and Societal Pro-reform Forces**

The most promising strategy for successful land reform implementation, as demonstrated by this study, involves the symbiotic interaction between autonomous societal groups from below and state reformists from above despite potential or actual differences in immediate motivations and long-term goals between them.

The post-1992 change in the balance of power within the state dynamically interacted with shifts in the balance of forces within society. The emergence of enclaves of state reformists within various departments of the executive branch of the government on the one hand, and the collapse of the hegemonic and sectarian communist-led ND movement which paved the way for the emergence of a more pluralist, broad-based rural people’s movement on the other, paved the way for a symbiotic interaction between state and societal pro-land reform forces to occur in the Philippines in the post-1992 period. Common strategizing toward land reform implementation marked the post-1992 coalition between the reform-oriented officials in the DAR and autonomous

social movements in a conflict-ridden process. These interactions occurred in three broad types, namely, one-on-one interface where local peasant groups sought dialogue with DAR offices; societal actor-initiated activities into which the DAR was drawn such as the broad-based Philippine Campaign for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (PhilCARRD); and DAR-initiated projects such as the Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) and the “National Task Force 24” and the “Task Force Sugarlands.” These widespread and regular interactions at the national level have benefited both parties, and have also rippled down through more local levels.<sup>2</sup>

The direct interfaces between local DAR officials and societal forces were facilitated and mediated generally by the national level coalition of pro-reform forces. Without such intervention, a positive interaction at the local level probably would not have come as rapidly and widespread as was necessary. Such pro-reform interactions effectively checked anti-reform tendencies within local DAR bureaucracies by making these offices more accountable and accessible to local societal actors, made the fence-sitters within DAR act in accordance to the orders of the top offices, and consolidated the actively pro-reform forces within the local DAR offices. The same interfaces impacted on the local societal groups who used to be only confrontational with state actors. With these interactions, societal actors have had to learn the art of negotiation, floor tactics, and joint strategizing with state actors. The symbiotic interaction between state and societal pro-reform actors greatly increased the power of pro-land reform forces. However, the achievement of such pro-reform alliance did not automatically lead to land reform implementation as will be discussed below.

## **5. Failure of the Landlord to Match the Initiatives of Pro-reform coalition.**

In most cases, land reform evasions by landlords occurred in collusion with state actors, as shown in numerous studies of land reform policy outcomes in the Philippines and elsewhere. It is thus logical that the most promising strategy to frustrate landlords’ schemes to evade land reform is to forge an alliance of state and societal reformist actors, although attainment of such a pro-reform coalition does not necessarily lead to reform. The lesson from the Langkaan, Cavite case in 1990 where former DAR Secretary Abad allied with autonomous societal actors but still lost the political battle for reform attests to the fact that the presence of such a pro-reform alliance does not automatically lead to land reform implementation. In another story, the Greenfields case in this study demonstrated that despite a pro-reform alliance between state and societal actors, anti-land reform forces can still evade direct expropriation. The pro-reform alliance thus must be able to offset the level of landlord evasive schemes in order to successfully carry out land reform implementation.

Several factors are important in enabling the pro-reform coalition to offset the anti-land reform coalition. First, neutralizing DAR’s anti-land reform officials and employees, if not converting them to reformism, denies landlords of their most important and accessible allies who are often also quite vulnerable to landlord pressures because of their spatial location. As already noted, all the cases in this study demonstrate how, after 1992, the initial successes of landlords in evading land reform were reversed after most of the local DAR officials were either neutralized or recruited to reformism. Second, a split within the ranks of the local elite can also greatly cripple landlords. The cases of Stanfilco and *sitio* Poultry most concretely demonstrate this fact.

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<sup>2</sup> These interactions did not only involve struggles for land expropriation and redistribution; it also involved initiatives to improve the situation in reformed areas through package of support services. The five cases examined in this research have in fact employed the same symbiotic interaction between pro-reform state and societal actors in meeting the challenge of effecting “rural development” after land redistribution. However, due to space limitation, this dimension of agrarian reform cannot be addressed sufficiently here.

Abandonment of local landlords by elite patrons “at the top,” or the failure to mobilize higher-level elite patrons can seriously weaken a landlord’s prospects for further access to higher levels of state power, as shown by the Candaba-San Luis and Maloles cases. Finally, timely and widespread media projection of a land dispute that tends to favor the peasant while publicly ostracizing the landlord can also be an effective means to weaken the landlord. This was true for all five cases examined in this paper.

A combination of some, if not all, these factors is necessary to ensure offsetting the level of land reform resistance mounted by the landlords. In the Greenfields case the landlord maintained a strong connection with state elites at the top, and became their greatest source of influence. But the media factor forced the corporation to give substantial lands and other concessions to the peasants. The variation in the constellation of these factors largely determines the kind of final outcome the land reform policy will have in a specific case.

In closing, this study restates the *relevance* and *urgency* of truly redistributive land reforms in countries like the Philippines where land, which continues to be inequitably distributed, means more than just an economic factor of production, but also an integral part of social, cultural and political being of peasants. This study shows that truly redistributive land reforms, meaning, both as social justice and economic development measure, are *feasible* in the neoliberal era where odds against such reforms are greatest. Political conflicts like the ones shown at the beginning of this study will most likely continue, or even heighten, if the land question in many parts of the world is not resolved democratically now.

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## 2. Video Material

Philippine Peasant Institute and North-South Films (1989). *"Hunger For Land"*

## 3. Interviews

*Manuel Quiambao*, Deputy Executive Director for Policy Advocacy, Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS), hand notes, Utrecht, Netherland, 14 and 21 May 1997.

- Malu Perpetua*, senior community organizer, PEACE Foundation - Southern Tagalog, hand notes, Amsterdam, Netherland, 30 June 1997
- Teofilo Juatco*, chairperson of MAKISAKA-Nueva Ecija, hand notes, Zurich, Switzerland, 22 September 1997
- Sr. Nida Pineda*, executive director of the Coconut Industry Reform Movement (COIR), hand notes, 21 September 1997.
- Gerry Acuna*, former Party Secretary (*Kalihim*) of the National Peasant Secretariat of the Executive Committee-Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), hand notes, Netherland, May 1997.
- "Ka Julian,"* former member of the Mindanao Commission of the Communist Party of the Philippines, hand notes, June 1997, Netherland.
- Ruben Esquejo*, executive director of NEPAD-Nueva Ecija, 8-page transcript from the taped interview conducted by Jennifer Franco of the *Komite ng Sambayanang Pilipino* (KSP), Utrecht, Netherland, 10 November, 1996.

