
State–Society Relations in Land Reform Implementation in the Philippines

Saturnino M. Borras Jr.

ABSTRACT

Contrary to earlier pessimistic predictions, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP) in the Philippines has achieved significant success in land redistribution, although not quite matching the original claims of the state. The dominant public policy and land reform literature, broadly divided between state-centred and society-centred approaches, has difficulty in fully explaining the unexpected outcomes of the CARP process. Going beyond these dichotomous views, and using Fox's interactive framework for analysing state–society relations, this article argues that redistributive land reform can be implemented in a politically hostile situation when initiatives by state reformists 'from above' positively interact with social mobilizations 'from below'.

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Among agrarian studies scholars, there is an emerging consensus that land reform is more difficult to implement in the context of a neoliberal setting (see, for example, Dorner, 1999). This consensus builds on a persistent policy dilemma: significant structural and institutional changes are often considered to be prerequisites for land reform implementation, but how are such changes to be achieved if not through land reform? The only solution to this 'chicken and egg' problem appears to be a radical version of land reform, broadly defined here as expropriatory and involving either free or subsidized redistribution to beneficiaries. In general, this can be done only when radical groups assume power, either through revolution and military coup or, in some instances, through electoral victories of leftist political parties. It can also occur under special geopolitical circumstances, as in Japan and Taiwan (see Griffin, 2000; Tai, 1974). Such cases, however, have been rare.

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While the only solution to the land reform problem may appear to be abandoning the classic redistributive land reform project altogether, the starting point of this article is that not all the evidence is in, and a closer examination of the problem is needed. The underlying issue is whether the outcomes of land reform policy are determined by structural factors alone, or by policy elites, or whether political dynamics can lead to unanticipated policy outcomes. The Philippines provides a useful case study because it is among the few countries today where redistributive land reform is being implemented with a significant degree of success. When the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP) was introduced in 1988, analysts were pessimistic about its prospects (see Lara and Morales, 1990; Putzel, 1992). Despite some progressive provisions, the programme got off to a halting start (Putzel, 1992; Riedinger, 1995); but implementation gained momentum in the mid-1990s, and by the end of 1999, significant accomplishments had been registered. While confounding the pessimists, CARP's achievements nevertheless fell far short of the original optimistic claims of the state. The available literature has had difficulty explaining CARP's unexpected outcomes. Following Fox (1993, Ch. 2), this article challenges a dichotomy in the literature between those who emphasize the role of policy elites in implementing land reform, and those who view the outcomes of land reform policy as predetermined by structural factors. These views are referred to as the state-centred and society-centred approaches, respectively.

- *State-Centred Approach*

The key units of analysis of this approach are the state, policy elites (policy-makers and managers) and the agencies or organizations responsible for carrying out public policies. Exponents of this approach, many of whom come from the Weberian theoretical tradition, see the state as an institution of governance autonomous from society. Taking the state as an independent actor and independent variable, state-centred scholars often assume that the state is autonomous in making policy choices and in transforming them into authoritative actions even when these run counter to the interests of the dominant classes or groups in society (Grindle and Thomas, 1989; Nordlinger, 1987). Many scholars of this approach place a premium on the administrative design of the policy, believing that such a policy, if carried out by an efficient state organization, has little reason to fail. State-centred approaches often view social actors such as peasant organizations and NGOs as necessary complements to the state's reformist efforts, recognizing the practical administrative and fiscal limitations of the state. 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 parameters by assigning them specific 'supporting roles' in policy implementation. Concerned with efficient policy implementation, policy elites tend to assume that

there is a need to avoid conflict; they therefore do not challenge entrenched elites and do not encourage criticism from societal actors. Finally, founded on the premise of state autonomy, state-centred approaches posit that state intervention can overcome structural and institutional obstacles mounted by landlords — by mustering sufficient ‘political will’ to effect reform, by efficient administrative and technical organization, and by ensuring sufficient funding to finance redistributive land reform (see Thomas and Grindle, 1990).

- *Society-Centred Approach*

Taking social classes and interest group formations in society as their key units of analysis, advocates of a society-centred 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 that social forces exert directly on the state, while others highlight the external constraints they impose. This approach assumes either that the state is monolithic, or that any internal differences within the state are direct reflections of societal interests. The activities of the state and policy elites are understood to be dependent variables. Thus, the policy choices and the behaviour of policy elites can be predicted on the basis of an analysis of class and group formations in society or in the international arena (El-Ghonemy, 1990). Proponents of this framework tend to argue that pro-reform forces must pressure the state into implementing land reform. Thus, effective peasant organizations, NGOs and political movements must necessarily be ‘independent’ of 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 and the state is necessarily conflict-ridden, and oppositional pressure politics is the most effective way to press for reforms. Focusing the analysis on social classes and class alignments based on a static view of the ‘prior distribution of power’ in society, this approach argues that to overcome 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.

Both of these approaches have limitations. The state-centred approach overemphasizes the autonomy of the state and the capacity of policy elites to overlook the weight of structural-institutional factors, societal groups and international institutions in obstructing redistributive reforms. This approach finds it difficult to explain why good public policies on redistributive reform, implemented by capable administrative organizations and sufficiently funded, can still fail. The society-centred approach, on the other hand, overplays the

significance of structural-institutional factors, societal groups and international institutions, neglecting the importance of state and policy elites in conceptualizing and implementing redistributive reforms. This approach cannot easily explain why, in some cases, state actors undertake autonomous actions that run counter to the interests of the dominant classes in society.

By adopting such one-dimensional views of state–society relations, both approaches have difficulty explaining why, in many cases, societal actors attempt to influence and transform state actors, but in the process are themselves transformed — and vice versa. On peasant mobilization specifically, society-centred approaches often struggle with the issue of why the actions of strong, independent peasant movements have led in many cases not to sustained land redistribution, but to violent retribution by the state and landlords. At the same time, state-centred approaches cannot explain fully why co-opted peasant organizations, often organized by policy elites as part of the state's extended administrative machinery, usually fail to perform even the 'supporting roles' assigned to them.

The rest of this article is organized as follows: an analysis of the structural and institutional context of CARP is followed by an examination of the implementation process and outcomes of the programme. A local case study is then presented, in which land reform was successfully carried out. The final section discusses the conceptual implications of the empirical evidence from the Philippines and offers some conclusions. The article is limited to an analysis of the part of CARP which fell under the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and not those under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

CARP: THE STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Philippines has an important agricultural sector: in 1999 it contributed a 19 per cent share to the Gross Domestic Product, and directly employed some 40 per cent of the country's total active labour force. The agrarian transformation which has occurred during the twentieth century, however, has been less than dynamic. It has taken place against the backdrop of highly skewed land ownership distribution and widespread rural poverty. The Gini-coefficient on land distribution was 0.64 in 1988 (Putzel, 1992); in 1999, the rural poor accounted for two thirds of the total poor in the Philippines.

After the politically and economically chaotic years of the Aquino administration (1986–92), a significant degree of political stability and economic revival were achieved by its successor. The Ramos administration (1992–98) tried to squeeze the agriculture sector of surplus factors of production for industrial development,¹ while maintaining and consolidating productive farms

1. See Rivera (1994) for excellent historical analysis.

that generate export earnings. While agriculture continues to be important in financing the industrial project of the elite, two other key sources have emerged over time, namely, foreign direct investments, and remittances from overseas Filipinos. Like the Ramos administration, the Estrada administration (1998 to 20 January 2001) tied its hopes for development to the three main pillars of the national economy. The new President, Gloria Arroyo, seems likely to continue or even deepen the same policies, given that she was the chief architect of neoliberal reforms in agriculture when she was still a senator.

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, and sugarcane) is characterized by obsolete production and exchange relations, but continues to be the major sector in terms of nationally aggregated monetary value and land-use. With high-volume, low-value crops and antiquated production technology, this sector is dominated by traditional landed elites whose provenance dates back to colonial times.² In contrast, the non-traditional sector produces low-volume, high-value crops and products such as banana, pineapple, and fish products, and has seen expansion, albeit less than expected, since the neoliberal resurgence. With different production and exchange relations, such as contract growing schemes and wage relations, this is the sector in which non-traditional landed elites, including urban-based entrepreneurs and multinational corporations, have gained the most ground. Modern technology and equipment, as well as a capitalist management system, also characterize these modern farm enclaves (see Hawes, 1987; Ofreño, 1980; Tadem et al., 1984; Vellema, 1994).

This traditional–modern dichotomy is not static and the line between the two broad types of farming system is in reality quite blurred: most farms exhibit some features of both types.³ Two important factors to note are that the process of rural capital accumulation is set against a background of inequitable distribution of productive resources, and that the Philippine agricultural sector seems ill-prepared for global neoliberal competition. Since the mid-1990s, the Philippines has been transformed into a net agricultural importing country, as its non-competitive farm sector struggles amidst cheap imports.

The structure of the country's economy, particularly its skewed land-ownership distribution, has had a profound impact on the structure of power relations and political institutions. Rural politics is dominated by local political bosses (*caciques*) who lord it over the countryside through a complex network of patronage (Anderson, 1988; Kerkvliet, 1995) that

2. See Boyce (1992), de la Rosa (1994), Aguilar (1998) and Hawes (1987) for background analyses.

3. See Hirtz (1998) for an analysis of non-capitalist factors in tenurial relations.

combines socioeconomic benefits for the rural poor with the threat and/or actual use of violence.⁴ The rise in economic significance of the non-traditional export crops sector has entailed a relative rise in the political influence of landlord-entrepreneurs, challenging the historical political influence of traditional landlords. This process is best illustrated by the fact that during CARP policy-making, the concession that the rice and corn landlords received was a modest adjustment of the compensation package for their lands (Riedinger, 1995: 201) while, in contrast, owners of commercial farms were able to force through coverage deferment (Borrás and Quiambao, 1998; Hayami et al., 1990; Rodríguez, 2000). Still, some traditional landlords have shown resilience over time and diversified their political and economic investments (Angeles, 1999).

Against this political background, cycles of violent peasant-based upheavals in the Philippines have been able to gain only intermittent concessions from the state. The elite response to peasant unrest has traditionally been a combination of repression, resettlement and limited reform. The Marcos land reform in 1972, for example, targeted close to a million hectares of tenanted rice and corn lands for redistribution, but was mainly directed against Marcos's political enemies and the nascent communist insurgency. While the Marcos land reform helped instil the concept of land reform, and install the necessary administrative machinery, after more than a decade of implementation, the programme's output in terms of land redistribution was far below the official claims (see Wurfel, 1988). It did, however, achieve significant output in leasehold (that is, reform from share tenancy to lease arrangement) of 500,000 ha (Deininger et al., 2000). Since none of the pre-CARP tenancy and land reform programmes seriously addressed the underlying causes of peasant unrest — the widespread lack of access to land for the rural poor — peasant unrest remained an important part of rural politics throughout the twentieth century. The most important post-war peasant-based revolution was the insurgency led by the Communist Party of the Philippines together with its armed wing, the New People's Army.

The transition from an authoritarian to a national electoral regime in 1986 did not lead to complete democratization of the countryside: even now, entrenched political elites continue to dominate the rural polity. These local elites use extensive patronage networks that combine (partial) provision of daily subsistence needs of rural poor households with the threat and/or actual use of violence.⁵ However, in recent years there has been some erosion of these rural authoritarian enclaves, in a political process which can be traced back partly to the series of highly constrained elections held during

4. For more on this, see Abinales (1998); Fegan (1993); Kerkvliet (1990, 2000); Rutten (2000a, 2000b); Sidel (1999).

5. See Fegan (1993); Franco (2000); Kerkvliet (1990, 1993, 1995, 2000); McCoy (1993); Rutten (2000a, 2000b); Sidel (1999).

and immediately after the period of authoritarian rule, and to sustained social mobilizations from below (Franco, 1998b, 2000). The transition period opened new political opportunities for democratization which led to a heated policy debate on agrarian reform.⁶ After initially dragging its feet on the issue, the Aquino administration was forced to act after thirteen peasants were gunned down by government troops near the Presidential Palace. Subsequent actions by the government eventually led to legislation with a new land reform policy: CARP.

CARP Targets and Implementing Mechanisms

In terms of scope, CARP initially covered 10.3 million ha of agricultural lands out of a total of 11.28 million ha⁷ of farmlands, private and public, productive or otherwise. With a ‘data clean-up’ campaign in 1996, the coverage was reduced to 8.064 million ha.⁸ CARP aimed to directly benefit 4 million rural poor households, or about 80 per cent of the peasant population. While the average farm size in the country is roughly 2 ha, the land reform award ceiling was set at 3 ha. Furthermore, leasehold reform was to be implemented in farms below the retention ceiling, which is 5 ha. There are areas that are formally excluded from land reform, such as military reserves and penal colonies, but CARP coverage includes the most modern export crop plantations. Finally, private lands and some government-owned lands were to be redistributed by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), while public lands were to be redistributed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

In terms of implementing mechanisms, CARP compensates landlords through a staggered, cash/bonds payment scheme based on a ‘just compensation principle’; beneficiaries have to pay for the land under an arrangement based on ‘affordability’. The government subsidizes the gap. CARP has various acquisition modes for private lands. Operation Land Transfer (OLT) is for rice and corn lands (the reform initiated on these lands under Marcos was later integrated within CARP). With the aim of lessening landlord resistance, the Voluntary-Offer-to-Sell (VOS) arrangement increases the cash portion of landlords’ compensation by 5 per cent (with a corresponding 5 per cent reduction in the bonds portion). Another mode aimed at securing landlord co-operation is Voluntary Land Transfer (VLT), which

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6. National regime transitions usually offer rare opportunities for popular claim-making mobilizations. For a recent contribution on this, see Houtzager (2000) in the context of rural Brazil.
 7. Different sources offer different estimates of acreage, ranging from 9.725 million ha to 12 million. The figure of 11.28 million ha is from FAOSTAT Agricultural Data.
 8. Using Putzel’s (1992: 29) data, there should still be close to 5 million ha of private lands to be covered by CARP, despite retention rights by landlords.

provides for the direct transfer of land to peasants under terms mutually agreed between peasants and landlords. In the last acquisition mode — Compulsory Acquisition (CA) — land is expropriated, whether or not the landlord co-operates with the programme. Both VOS and VLT, whilst encouraging co-operation, operate under the threat of expropriation. OLT for rice and corn is essentially a CA type mechanism.

Stock Distribution Option (SDO) is a mode designed for corporate farms. SDO exempts lands from redistribution if the owner opts for corporate stock sharing with peasant beneficiaries. Expropriation of some commercial farms was deferred for ten years (1988–98), ostensibly to allow plantation owners to recoup their investments, and also to prepare farm workers for their eventual takeover of these farms. Meanwhile, under certain conditions, CARP allows for peasant beneficiaries to lease out awarded lands to an investor ('leaseback' arrangement).

CARP PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

CARP Achievements in Comparative Perspective

Table 1 shows that the accomplishments of CARP are comparable with the outcomes of land reforms in a number of other countries. Three contextual issues are relevant within this comparative exercise. The first is the question of public and private lands. Whereas in many Latin American settings, for instance, land reform refers to private lands, in the Philippines, most public lands have actually been intensively cultivated and are under the effective control of local and foreign elites: CARP implementation in these areas has been highly contentious and has a 'redistributive' character.⁹ The second concerns the political setting within which land reforms were carried out. The majority of successful reforms have been carried out under revolutionary regimes, or by elected radical socialist groups, or by military dictatorships. CARP stands out among land reforms carried out within an 'electoral-democratic' setting. The third is that CARP is among the few land reforms carried out during the neoliberal period. Whereas in the earlier period global contexts were relatively favourable to agrarian reform and the concept of expropriative redistributive land reform held the upper hand in policy consensus, a more competitive neoliberal paradigm exists today. Of the land reforms initiated since the early 1980s, CARP has posted greater gains than those in Zimbabwe, El Salvador, or South Africa.

9. Examples of such areas include cattle ranches leased by private landlords, plantations devoted to export crops, and 'timberlands'. Unfortunately, most scholars and activists have taken for granted the issue of public lands in the Philippines (e.g. El-Ghonyem, 1999: 8).

Table 1. Land Reform Accomplishments in Selected Countries

Country	Years	Redistributed v-a-v Total Farmland	Beneficiary v-a-v Total Farm HHs	Sources
Philippines	1988–99	42	42	Farmland = based on 11.28 million ha total farmland (1999 data); Households = based on 4.96 total agricultural households (1999 data). <i>Source</i> : FAOSTAT Agriculture Data ¹⁰
Cuba	Since 1959	80	75	Kay (1998: 11–12)
Bolivia	1952–77	74.5	83.4	Thiesenhusen (1989: 10–11)
Chile	1964–73	Nearly 50	20	Kay (1998: 11–12)
Peru	1963–1976	42.4	32	De Janvry (1981: 206)
Mexico	1970 data	42.9	43.4	Thiesenhusen (1989: 10–11)
Ecuador	1964–85	34.2	No data	Zevallos (1989: 52)
El Salvador	From 1980 through 1990s	20	12	Paige (1996: 136)
Venezuela	Up to 1979	19.3	25.4	Paige (1996); Dorner (1992: 48)
Costa Rica	1961–1979	7.1	13.5	Paige (1996: 136)
South Africa	1995–2000	1.65	2.0	SA Dept of Land Affairs (2000)

Land Acquisition and Distribution

CARP can claim some substantial achievements. By the end of 1999, CARP had redistributed 4.84 million ha of land, some 60 per cent of its target.¹¹ This accounts for approximately 42 per cent of the country's total farmland. Some 2.1 million rural poor households have directly benefited from redistribution, representing 42 per cent of the total agricultural population of 4.96 million agricultural households in 1999 (FAOSTAT). CARP started formally in 1988, and the Marcos land reform in rice and corn that began in

10. Different government offices offer different population-related data. I opted to use the FAOSTAT data. The 4.96 million agricultural households include all those who are directly and indirectly engaged in different forms of 'farming'. This data is calculated from the total agricultural population of 29.75 million (FAOSTAT), divided by 6 (the average size of a Filipino family in rural areas) = 4.96 million agricultural households. These data are corroborated by the recently released *World Development Report 2000/1* (World Bank, 2000: 277).
11. Critics claim that official figures are inflated. They argue that some beneficiaries have received land award certificates but cannot occupy the land because of landlord resistance. There are also cases of beneficiary desertion, illegal and 'distress' sales by beneficiaries, and widespread reversals (withdrawal of certificates). While these incidents are not to be dismissed, their extent should not be exaggerated. For example, incidents of uninstalled beneficiaries in private estates affect no more than 50,000 ha, and even a few thousand reversals do not constitute a general failure. A 5 per cent reduction on the official figures seems reasonable.

1972 was integrated into it. However, between 1972 and 1988, land redistribution in rice and corn was not so significant.

Within this overall picture, some issues have to be noted (see Table 2). First, in contrast to a general belief that DAR's land distribution achievement is mainly in public lands, in fact half of all DAR redistributions affect private estates. At 1.458 million ha (OLT + PAL), this constitutes half of total targeted private lands. Second, private lands redistributed via expropriatory acquisition modes (CA + OLT) covered almost half of the total redistributed private estates. It seems that DAR administrators encouraged less contentious acquisition modes, as the Voluntary Offer-to-Sell (VOS) accounted for a quarter of the total private estates acquired. Arguably, there is an essential difference between VOS agreements under Aquino and those of the Ramos and subsequent administrations. Many VOS activities in recent years have actually been last-minute compromises between government and landlords. When landlords realized that their efforts to evade land reform were futile, they normally negotiated for better compensation packages as offered under VOS.

What is alarming is the rise of Voluntary Land Transfer (VLT). VLT-based 'redistribution' accounted for a quarter of the total 'redistributed' private landholdings, and 8.2 per cent of the total DAR output. However, VLT transactions are the most contentious element in the official data on CARP. It seems likely that many landlords, in connivance with some DAR officials and/or 'beneficiaries', used VLT as a mechanism to essentially

Table 2. DAR Land Redistribution Achieved, 1972 to 2000 (in ha)

Acquisition Mode	Total (1972–99)	Marcos (1972–85)	Aquino (1986–92)	Ramos (July 1992– June 1998)	Estrada (July 1998– 1 Jan. 2000)
Philippines Total	4,841,634	–	–	–	–
<i>Philippine Total DAR*</i>	3,041,634	70,175	848,518	1,900,035	222,907
OLT (rice and corn)	529,554	15,059	358,907	142,851	12,737
GOL	875,049	0	166,348	655,171	53,530
SETTLEMENTS	632,983	44,075	208,795	356,646	23,467
LANDED ESTATES	74,726	11,041	24,690	38,354	641
PAL	929,323	0	89,779	707,012	132,532
VOS	361,969		55,332	256,032	50,605
VLT	399,330		20,734	330,092	48,504
CA	168,024		13,713	120,888	33,423
DENR's Public Lands	1,800,000	–	–	–	–

Notes:

OLT = Operation Land Transfer under Marcos's PD 27 (private rice and corn lands); GOL = Government-owned Lands; PAL = Privately owned Agricultural Lands; VOS = Voluntary Offer-to-Sell; VLT = Voluntary Land Transfer; CA = Compulsory Acquisition

* Excluded is the land redistribution accomplishment of 49,710 hectares (1988 to 1999) from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

Source: DAR (2000).

evade land reform by ‘faking’ redistribution, although the absence of empirical data showing the extent of genuine and faked redistributions under VLT make this hard to prove. Finally, as noted earlier, this article focuses on the DAR only: official data on public lands under the DENR have still to be scrutinized.¹²

Meanwhile, contrary to earlier fears, the Stock Distribution Option (SDO) has not been adopted on a wide scale: except for a few minor SDO arrangements, the only known major case is the 6,400 ha sugarcane Hacienda Luisita owned by ex-President Aquino’s family where the redistributive essence of CARP was violated (see Putzel, 1992: 332–8). Moreover, expropriating commercial plantations whose land redistribution coverage was deferred until 1998 proved highly contentious amidst the escalation of anti-reform manipulations by plantation owners. Yet, a number of plantations were successfully expropriated (see Borrás, 1999: 91–99), although many of these were subsequently placed under leaseback arrangements, the terms of which are usually disadvantageous to farmworker-beneficiaries. Finally, the reform from sharecropping to long-term lease arrangement, or leasehold, has proven to be difficult to implement, politically and administratively. While estimates suggest 2 million ha of farms (below 5 ha) that ought to be placed under leasehold, government estimates of outcomes range from ‘several tens of thousands’ to ‘a few hundred thousand’ hectares (excluding the 500,000 ha of rice and corn earlier placed under such arrangements). To date, the CARP output evaluation process within the DAR bureaucracy (and NGOs) remains fixated on ‘physical land transfers’, and tends to take for granted the weight of tenurial reforms via leasehold.¹³

The Evolution of CARP Implementation

The period of CARP implementation can be broken down roughly into three segments (also see Table 2). For each of these, redistribution outputs and the nature of interactions between state and societal actors were different.

1. The period of scandals and lacklustre performance (1987 to June 1992, Aquino Administration)

In this period, redistribution amounted to a little over a quarter of the DAR total output. Of this amount, 42.3 per cent was in rice and corn, and nearly

12. It is likely that included in the achievement reports are public lands transferred into the effective control of local elites.

13. This is one reason why there are no systematic databanks on leasehold accomplishment.

half was accounted for by government-owned lands. Compulsory acquisition accounted for only 3 per cent of total private lands acquired, and VOS and VLT accounted for 17 per cent of total private estates during this period. Thus, the achievements of this period centred on the less contentious land components and acquisition modes.¹⁴ ‘Contentiousness’ here is a relative concept — although all aspects of land reform are open to contention, some types of lands and some acquisition modes were more contentious than others, depending on the anti-reform obstacles mounted by landlords. Rice and corn and public lands, for example, are less contentious than commercial farms. While land reform in the former has not been smooth or automatic, more open political conflicts have been a characteristic of the implementation process in the latter. Similarly, VOS has proven to be less voluntary in practice than its name might suggest, and acquisition under this mode has not always been easy. But when compared to the compulsory acquisition mode, VOS proves to be relatively less contentious.

There are a number of factors behind the outcome of this first period. First, as the result of a series of public scandals (corruption related to land reform) in the CARP process, the DAR under Aquino had four different Secretaries; because of these frequent changes at the top, it failed to gather momentum in pushing for land reform. Second, one of the most significant ‘achievements’ of this period was the infamous SDO in President Aquino’s Hacienda Luisita, mentioned above. Corazon Aquino was the first landlord to evade CARP on such a grand scale, and this created a deeply negative atmosphere for the cause of agrarian reform. Third, the macro-economic situation in the country was poor, and the political situation was very unstable. Fourth, autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs continued to campaign against CARP partly because the DAR refused to work with them. With the exception of the short period of office of Secretary Florencio Abad, the DAR bureaucracy opted to work solely with state co-opted peasant organizations. Finally, the most important agrarian reform actor in terms of a mobilizable base — the national-democratic bloc — remained staunchly opposed to CARP and unwilling to engage the state within the framework of reform.

(2) *The period of increased momentum and modest success (July 1992 to June 1998, Ramos Administration)*

The Ramos administration witnessed a surge in CARP implementation, achieving more than double the output of the previous administration. This period accounts for two-thirds of total DAR output for the period 1972–99.

14. Although many ricelands in the vicinity of the urban sprawl have proven to be highly contentious.

A closer look reveals that: i) almost half of the redistribution achieved was in government-owned lands; ii) rice and corn lands accounted for 7.5 per cent of total output; iii) compulsory acquisition covered 14.2 per cent of total private estates acquired; and iv) VOS and VLT accounted for 69 per cent of all private lands acquired.

The Ramos administration thus maintained the tendency to focus on the less contentious landholdings and acquisition modes. Nevertheless, and despite some problematic issues like the surge in VLT transactions, it was during this period that the agrarian reform process showed some vigour. This encouraging performance can be partly explained by a number of interrelated factors. First, the Ramos administration was able to stabilize the political situation of the country and stimulate the national economy. Second, the administration appointed NGO leader Ernesto Garilao as DAR Secretary: he brought in a number of NGO activists to occupy key DAR positions, undermining the traditional hold of conservative forces within the department. Third, Garilao's DAR carried out widespread and sustained re-training and re-tooling campaigns among the department's employees and officials, and succeeded in reviving the interest and confidence of the foreign donor community in CARP. Furthermore, and perhaps most crucially, the DAR under Garilao recognized the importance of working closely with autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs, rather than the traditional state co-opted groups. This became possible after the 1992 collapse of the 'National-Democratic' social movements. The bulk of the ND cadres decided to abandon their stance of outright opposition to CARP, steering instead along the difficult path of critical engagement with the state. Towards the end of the Garilao DAR era, an unprecedented breadth had been achieved in the political diversity of rural social movements within this critical engagement. These combined factors contributed to an increased momentum in the agrarian reform process that led to modest, but profoundly encouraging, success.

The Garilao administration of DAR made strategic contributions to the reform process. It can also be credited with ensuring the continuity of reform beyond 1998, the year when CARP should have ended after ten years of implementation. A new law was passed in February 1998 which gave CARP another ten years, until 2008, to complete its work.¹⁵ The Garilao period also saw an improvement in the functioning of the legal arm of DAR (although it still remains relatively weak). The legal case resolution rate improved from 53 per cent in 1992 to 95 per cent in 1997, despite a tremendous increase in the quantity of cases, from 8,184 to 117,487 (see Garilao, 1998).

15. For details, see Borrás (1999: Ch.2, fn 69).

(3) *The most difficult period in CARP implementation (July 1998 to 20 January 2001, Estrada Administration)*

As we have seen, the two earlier periods dealt with the less contentious elements of CARP, leaving the most contentious components to be implemented under the Estrada administration, and subsequently the Arroyo government. The DAR, under the short-lived leadership of political activist Horacio Morales Jr, had to address the most difficult private estates. As of mid-1998, the remaining land reform agenda was comprised of coconut lands (75 per cent), sugar haciendas (15 per cent), deferred commercial plantations (5 per cent), and a few remaining rice and corn lands (5 per cent). The balance sheet for the first one and a half years of the Morales DAR (July 1998 to December 1999) shows that 5.7 per cent of its achievements were in rice and corn lands; government-owned lands accounted for one third of output; and compulsory acquisition accounted for about a quarter. Finally, while the Morales DAR ended the earlier concentration on less contentious lands (no doubt through lack of choice), it followed its predecessors' choices of less contentious acquisition modes: VOS and VLT accounted for two thirds of total redistributed private lands. It should also be noted that during the Morales DAR, two thirds of redistribution was in private landholdings, a higher proportion than under its predecessors.

Other relevant contexts were less than favourable to the advancement of agrarian reform. For instance, financial difficulties in the country produced a budget crunch, and anti-CARP members of the Congress cut the annual fund allocations for land acquisition and redistribution under CARP. Furthermore, the Office of the President seemed unable to resist pressures from its elite supporters either to exempt the latter's land from expropriation or to approve non-expropriatory arrangements for these lands. One example of this was the special deal with Marcos-crony and Estrada ally Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco for his 4000 ha estate in Negros Occidental. Moreover, national political stability and public confidence were not strong points of the Estrada administration, and later led to the President being ousted from office.

Although it is understandable that the contentious character of the lands still to be expropriated would slow down the pace of redistribution, there were also a number of operational/administrative and political strategy-related problems within the Morales DAR that contributed to the relatively low rates of land acquisition and distribution. Furthermore, the pro-CARP civil society organizations were divided on how to relate with the Morales DAR and the Estrada administration in general. The problems that developed in the relationship weakened the pro-reform state-society alliance. It remains to be seen how the new President will address the agrarian reform issue, although some civil society organizations are suspicious of Gloria Arroyo because of her crucial role in the crafting of far-reaching neoliberal reforms in agriculture. In addition, she counts among her close allies big landlords like Corazon Aquino.

Thus, after an unpromising start, CARP was able to gain momentum in the early 1990s. A key to this positive change was the decision of the Garilao DAR to work with autonomous NGOs and peasant organizations, breaking the DAR tradition of collaborating only with uncritical, state-co-opted peasant associations. The experiences of CARP also illustrate the distinctive political characters of the different branches of government. While the legislature remains dominated by landed-elites and so continues to manoeuvre against agrarian reform (at times collaborating with the judiciary), the national executive branch (particularly DAR) has proven to be more open and receptive to social mobilizations from below because of the presence of reform-oriented and ‘modernizing’ bureaucrats.¹⁶ Yet, under certain conditions (such as elite cleavages due to electoral imperatives), the legislature could also be forced to pass pro-agrarian reform laws, as happened in early 1998 when Congress approved RA 8532, extending CARP’s implementation period and putting in an additional fund of PhP 50 bn. The differentiated nature of the state therefore provides both obstacles to, and opportunities for reforms, making the struggle for land reform difficult but not impossible. However, the class composition of the ruling elite faction also influences the extent to which modernizing reformists are allowed to occupy spaces within the state. Of the periods studied here, the Ramos presidency was arguably the least ‘captured’ by the landed elite, allowing for the rise of a modernizing military technocrat. Moreover, the narrow 23 per cent electoral mandate garnered by Ramos in the 1992 presidential election forced him to broaden his political base partly via popular reforms like agrarian reform. This partly explains why it was only after mid-1992, when Ramos had replaced Aquino, that state reformists were able to influence DAR operations.

The Peasant Movement

In the 1970s and 1980s, the political landscape of the Philippines was marked by the phenomenal growth of a peasant-based insurgency led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The repressive Marcos regime permitted only clandestine forms of struggle; the CPP quickly became the spearhead in the opposition movement against Marcos. This CPP-led movement became known as the National-Democratic Movement, or ‘ND’, because of its vision of a two-stage revolution, aspiring first to achieve ‘national democracy’, before entering the second stage, the socialist revolution. The principal form of struggle was armed; ‘proletariats’ were identified as the ‘leading force’, while the peasantry was considered the ‘main force’ (Guerrero, 1970). The ideological, political and organizational

16. On this, see Gutierrez (1994) and Quitoriano (2000).

makeup of the ND peasant organizations, led by the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP, Peasant Movement of the Philippines) was framed from this orientation.¹⁷ As the creator of the KMP, the CPP controlled the organization in a very ‘instrumentalist’ fashion (Putzel, 1995).

Launched in 1985, the KMP became the main legal peasant movement opposed to the authoritarian regime. During the 1986–88 land reform policy debate, however, other progressive organizations developed, such as the highly differentiated social-democratic group. This group pushed for the formation of a national coalition of peasants, 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 that resulted from the ND movement’s boycott of the snap presidential election contested by Marcos and Aquino, joined the coalition. The CPAR was at the forefront of the lobby for a land reform policy, but the KMP never believed that the landlord-dominated Congress would pass a progressive land reform policy.

When CARP became law in June 1988, it was rejected by almost all peasant organizations across the political spectrum, not least because it fell far short of the CPAR proposal for a zero retention limit. The CPAR formulated its alternative land reform proposal, the ‘People’s Agrarian Reform Code’ or PARCode, and vowed to amend CARP through a nationwide signature campaign, invoking the ‘people’s initiative’ clause enshrined in the Constitution. The KMP advanced the most radical critique of CARP, totally rejecting the policy as ‘pro-landlord’ and ‘anti-peasant’. Ignoring the CPAR signature campaign, it instead intensified its land occupation campaign, a strategy that it deemed more effective in polarizing the political situation, and thus put the ND radical, armed form of struggle (which was then beginning to lose vigour) back on the national political agenda.¹⁸ Most of these land occupations were not sustained, however:¹⁹ the KMP’s land occupation campaign contributed to keeping the issue of land reform on the national agenda, but failed as an alternative land reform programme.²⁰

17. Franco (2000) offers an excellent analysis of the early evolution of the ND peasant movement.

18. In many cases, the KMP conducted its land occupations with the direct participation of the NPA. In other cases, areas that were projected as KMP-occupied lands were the same communities that earlier been subjected to the CPP’s ‘agrarian revolution’ programme. In some cases, peasants occupied lands and later sought assistance from the KMP.

19. For analyses of peasant land invasions, see Kerkvliet (1993); Sarmiento (1992). The majority of invaded lands were later recovered by the landlords with the aid of private armies and the military; those lands which were retained by the KMP were usually not made productive.

20. The revolutionary land reform programmes being carried out selectively in some areas where the NPA was strong suffered a fate similar to the KMP’s land occupations. Hawes (1990), Padilla (1990), and Putzel (1995) are useful on this.

By the late 1980s, it was clear that the mass base of the ND movement had been seriously eroded, partly due to the government's counter-insurgency offensive. In order to recover this lost base, the National Peasant Secretariat (NPS) of the CPP Central Committee revised some of its strategies and tactics. It called for direct engagement with the government in reformist policy implementation, such as CARP, rather than merely conducting propaganda campaigns within an 'expose and oppose' framework.²¹ By 1992, a number of non-KMP, 'ND-influenced' peasant organizations had been formed in different agricultural crop sectors.²² By early 1992, the KMP was geared up to institutionalize the new orientation, but at the end of that year, a serious split occurred within the CPP that impacted on all ND organizations, so that the initial momentum of KMP's reorientation had to be realized outside the ND organizational framework.

The disunity which had been brewing 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 National Democratic Front, with all their legal organizations, split into several groups.²³ One group reaffirmed the basic principles of the Marxist–Leninist–Maoist ideology. The key national leaders of the KMP opted to dissociate themselves from the Maoist bloc, and instead formed the *Demokratikong Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (DKMP, Democratic Peasant Movement of the Philippines). The Maoist KMP retained a sizeable portion of the original mass base of the organization, mostly in NPA-controlled areas. The DKMP, while taking a modest share of the original base, was supported by local peasant organizations that emerged during the reorientation period.²⁴ Its first major resolution was to engage with the government on the issue of land reform, using CARP as a starting

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21. Among other things, the new strategy involved reinvigorating organizational work in the more populous lowland areas (the CPP's focus was on the uplands, mainly for guerilla base building). The new strategy was to be 'inclusive' (going beyond the rigid class lines of the CPP), 'fast-track' (compared to the clandestine and protracted NPA methods) and 'issue-based' (aimed at immediate socio-economic gains without losing strategic perspective). From late 1989 to 1993, this approach proved to be effective in recovering the lost mass base, organizing new communities, and securing concrete socio-economic gains for the peasants. See PEACE (1994), KMP (1992) and DKMP (1993). Rutten (2000a) provides a relevant analysis of rural peasant mobilization (in Negros Occidental) from an anthropological perspective.
 22. Examples are the Federation of Rice and Corn Peasants (BUTIL) and the Federation of Small Coconut Farmers (KAMMPIL).
 23. Rocamora (1994) is useful for a national analysis. Rutten (2000b) provides a relevant 'view from below'.
 24. Much later, DKMP suffered internal problems rooted mainly in personality differences among the key national peasant leaders. Most DKMP chapters eventually joined other local progressive peasant and farmworkers organizations and in June 2000 launched a new national coalition: *Pambansang Ugnayan ng mga Nagsasariling Organisasyon ng Mamamayan sa Kanayunan* (UNORKA, National Coordination of Local Autonomous Rural People's Organizations).

point.²⁵ The timing was fortuitous, as by now, the new DAR leadership under Garilao was showing its reformist tendencies.

After Ramos's election in mid-1992, the CPAR was disbanded, partly because about half of the member organizations had supported Ramos's presidential bid, despite his campaign for a 50 ha retention limit adjustment in CARP. The demise of the CPAR and the ND split in turn created an opportunity for realignments within the broad left and centre-left peasant movement and NGO community.²⁶ The emergence of these broad formations of autonomous rural social movements, combined with the widespread erosion of the CPP's influence, ushered in an era characterized by militancy and pragmatism among rural people's movements in the country that would contribute to the relative success of CARP implementation.

Autonomous Social Movements from Below meet Reformist Initiatives from Above

The interactions between state reformists from above and social movements from below contributed to the relative success of CARP in the mid- to late-1990s. State reformists — that is, state actors who were tolerant and even supportive of social mobilizations — became entrenched within the DAR. With some degree of autonomy from anti-reform currents within the state and society, they built up DAR's capacity to implement reforms. Most importantly, they recognized the role played by autonomous social movements. By 1994, DAR had to begin moving into the more contentious components of CARP, and for this it found an alliance with autonomous peasant organizations indispensable. Meanwhile, the political landscape of the rural social movements had also been dynamically altered. New players had emerged and had built up their political and legal capacities, alignments had shifted, and traditional co-opted peasant organizations had become increasingly isolated.

There were at least three ways in which this new interface could be seen. The first was the emergence of one-on-one dialogue, in which an individual case would be taken up and handled by government officials. Although inherently time-consuming, this can produce immediate results. It happens when local cases are elevated to the DAR national office for speedy resolution in favour of the peasants, and is most likely to occur in cases which are politically explosive in character. Secondly were the NGO/APO-initiated campaigns. In this type of interaction, rural social movements initiated

25. Changes in the nature and settings of political institutions can influence the (re)definition of goals of claim-makers *vis-à-vis* the state. See Thelen and Steinmo (1992: 1–32).

26. A new coalition of NGOs and peasant organizations was formed — the Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS) — which brought together the former ND peasant network, 'popular-democrats', and Bisig. See Franco (1999).

nationally-coordinated campaigns in which state actors were enticed or forced to engage. An example of this was ‘Task Force 24’. In 1994 the Philippine Ecumenical Action for Community Empowerment (PEACE) Foundation and its network of local, autonomous peasant organizations (APOs) and NGOs initiated a dialogue with the DAR regarding land reform issues in twenty-four provinces. A joint PEACE-DAR working committee was established, called Task Force 24, whose main objective was fast-track land acquisition and distribution in those provinces. This entailed collective efforts to identify major landholdings or ongoing local land disputes, and joint strategizing on how to defeat landlords’ resistance in order to expedite expropriation and redistribution of land. The dynamic and often conflict-ridden interaction between local DAR officials, NGOs and peasant organizations was mediated by national level DAR officials and NGOs. Toward the end of the Garilao administration, this interface mechanism was further consolidated and expanded, and renamed ‘Project 40 Now!’. It was also at this time that the local expression of this pro-reform, state–society alliance, ProCARRDs (Provincial Campaigns on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development), became more coherent and widespread.

The third illustration of the new interface was DAR-initiated campaigns — campaigns or programmes initiated by state actors in which rural social movements were obliged to engage. An example of this was ‘Operation Sugarland’, where DAR planned to fast-track land redistribution in this sector. This initiative, however, was unsuccessful.

There were several other important areas in which DAR reformists and autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs interacted positively, as well as more informal interfaces. DAR reformists also actively checked tendencies within the military to repress autonomous peasant organizations, or even used the military and police to defeat landlords’ violent resistance, as in the case in Buenavista, Quezon (Franco, 1998a). The pro-reform state–society relationship that began during the Garilao DAR continued during the Morales DAR, but not without major shifts in alignments and political biases on both sides. It remains to be seen how the alliance for agrarian reform will fare under the Arroyo administration. The national-level state–society alliance was founded upon, and also had an impact on, local initiatives for land reform. This is one reason why CARP land redistribution outcomes are uneven and varied across geographic locations: in regions where landlord resistance is strong and pro-reform state–society interaction weak, land reform performance is particularly low.

THE CASE OF CANDABA-SAN LUIS, PAMPANGA

Land redistribution results under CARP were varied and uneven. For the purposes of this article, we will focus on one particular case from which lessons can be drawn. The case of Candaba-San Luis is relevant because it

involved a difficult land dispute, resulting from the fairly large size and high value of the farm and the presence of politically powerful landlords. The setting of this case can thus provide lessons on how to expropriate other private estates that have broadly similar characteristics.

The conflict in this case involved some 6000 ha of irrigated ricelands in the towns of Candaba and San Luis in Pampanga in central Luzon.²⁷ This area, popularly known as the Candaba swamp, produces rice and vegetables once a year, during the dry season. During the rainy months the whole area is submerged under runoff coming from the Pampanga River. The overflow from the river brings different freshwater fish into the submerged farms, giving the area its unique dual character as a farmland and fishery ground. The unique natural endowment of the swamp makes its fishery potentials more financially attractive to landlords. These farms had not been touched by the Marcos land reform.

The plain has a history of violent peasant protest. The Candaba swamp had been a hotbed of uprisings in the past, notably in the 1930s and in the *Huk* rebellion of the 1940s–1950s. Candaba was one of the cradles of the *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan* (HMB, People's Liberation Army) of the (old) *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP) (see Kerkvliet, 1977). The area 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 continued to struggle, and have succeeded in lowering land rents since the 1960s. According to village people, some sixty of their comrades have been killed over the past few decades in agrarian-related struggles. However, such persistent peasant protests did not succeed in changing the land property relations in these communities until an opening from above emerged in the shape of CARP.

In the late 1980s, CARP created an atmosphere of 'guarded optimism' among the peasants in the swamp. After several years of implementation, however, there was still no sign of CARP reaching the Candaba-San Luis farms. In 1991, unknown to the peasants, the landlords had been trying to secure from the DAR regional office deferment permits for their estates on the grounds that the farms were essentially fishponds and not rice farms. The peasants discovered the landlords' scheme only later when they began to mobilize by seeking an audience with local DAR officials.

Finding that the local DAR was said to be ready to grant the landlords' requests, and aware of their landlords' political clout, the peasants used their historical and individual connections with political organizations to contact the provincial centre of PEACE Foundation which was engaged in similar land disputes in adjacent towns. After carefully studying the

27. Primary data for this case study were gathered through formal and informal interviews of key actors, and via participant observation on various occasions from 1995 to 1999. I thank Dominique Caouette for sharing his fieldnotes.

parameters of their struggle *vis-à-vis* the provisions of the law, the peasants, together with their new NGO ally, started to make representations to the local and regional DAR offices. They made little progress, however, since the local DAR personnel were apparently influenced by the powerful landlords and would not respond clearly and positively to their counterclaim.

The change in the national DAR leadership in mid-1992 renewed the peasants' hopes. During the delay caused by the transition in the DAR bureaucracy, the peasants and their allies were able to consolidate the joining villages into a relatively coherent force. Seasonal farmworkers also became active participants in these mobilizations. In April 1994, an ad hoc organization of tenants and farmworkers called *Malayang Magsasaka ng Candaba at San Luis* (MMCSL, Free Farmers of Candaba and San Luis) was formed. A series of pickets, dialogues and street demonstrations were carried out by the peasants, aimed at both the local and national levels of DAR bureaucracies. Their NGO ally provided a substantial portion of their logistical needs, from transportation to food and accommodation in Manila. They also brought in the media to cover the issue, and facilitated direct interface between the local peasants and the proper authorities within the DAR bureaucracy.

Such mobilizations brought to the fore the key features of this specific land dispute, which in turn caused a split among the local DAR officials, between those who supported the deferment permit and others who wanted to push for immediate expropriation. But the same process led to a consensus within the new DAR leadership, which might have seen in this case an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to reform. The DAR national leadership appeared to realize that, with the same amount of effort needed to deal with a 10 ha landholding, they could acquire and redistribute 6000 ha.

The positive response from the national DAR boosted the morale of the pro-reform alliance which had formed around the Candaba-San Luis community, encouraging the mass entry into the local organization of thousands more tenants and farmworkers who had stayed away for fear of reprisals from their landlords. This broadening participation in the land struggle, which at this point numbered some 3000 peasants, inspired the members to escalate their collective actions. They began setting up camps in front of the provincial and national DAR offices, a move which brought them coverage in the national media, putting the landlords on the defensive politically.

Finally, in August 1994 the DAR rejected the landlords' petition for deferment and the DAR ordered the immediate and formal expropriation of about 3000 ha. The landlords made a last attempt to block the reform, but when they realized the decisiveness of the pro-reform moves, they backed off and shifted their strategy to demanding very high compensation. Victory was secured: under CARP provisions, land redistribution could proceed despite the protests of the landlords over the issue of compensation.

However, at this point the victory was only partial, because the DAR were willing to redistribute only 3000 ha, benefiting around 1000 peasants

(out of some 3000 potential beneficiaries). Suspecting that either the landlords had been able to manipulate the process or the local DAR offices had simply been inefficient, the peasants and their allies resumed their mobilization to press for the entire 6000 ha to be redistributed and for more peasants to be included as beneficiaries. Finally, in January 1995, the DAR announced that the Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) for almost 5000 ha would be released in March, pending some technical processes in the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) related to the landlords' compensation protest. Victory was clinched the following month. The land struggle in Candaba-San Luis is not yet over: the conflict continues over the remaining 1000 ha not yet covered by expropriation. Here the landlords continue to mount resistance to reform, using technical issues such as difficulty in land surveys, to evade expropriation.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The empirical evidence from CARP implementation throws doubt upon the ability of either the state-centred or the society-centred approach to fully explain policy processes and outcomes. First, society-centred initiatives for land reform, specifically through peasant land occupations, did not lead to sustained land redistribution but to violent landlord retribution and state repression. Second, the state-centred push under the Aquino administration, with the use of state-co-opted peasant associations, did not improve CARP implementation. Third, implementation started to gain momentum and modest success only during the Ramos administration. The pro-reform alliance between state reformists and autonomous social movements was principally responsible for the progressive change in the course of the CARP process. In this light, an alternative 'interactive' approach developed by Fox (1993) is better equipped to provide an analysis of the CARP process.²⁸

An 'Interactive Approach' to State–Society Relations

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 can, on its own, explain the land reform implementation process in the Philippines. As Bright and Harding (1984: 4) argue:

States are neither static givens lording over society nor subservient by-products of other social forces. [States] 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

28. Evans (1997) and Migdal et al. (1994) are also useful.

fantastic diversity and fluidity of form, function and malfunction that current studies of states and political processes reveal.

State is thus defined here as that which ‘comprises the *ensemble* of political, social, economic and coercive institutions that exercise “public” authority in a given territory’ (Fox, 1993: 11–12).

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, 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, cited in Fox, 1993: 12). 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, 1993). For instance, a state may have the autonomy to pursue redistributive land reform, but may have no capacity to implement it; conversely, it may have the capacity to implement the reform but not the 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, as the policy is put in the crucible of state–society relations where changes in the balance of power within the state dynamically interact with the shifting alignments of forces in society. State and society actors are each transformed through conflict (*ibid.*). This brief conceptual clarification should guide a longer discussion on the interactive approach toward a better understanding of the CARP process.

Social Mobilization from Below

Peasants are not passive societal actors. The literature on peasant mobilization reveals the extent of peasants’ participation in grand historical wars that have transformed societies, such as the German peasant war of 1525 (Bak, 1975) and numerous revolutions during the twentieth century (Wolf, 1969). On the other hand, the literature on ‘everyday forms of peasant resistance’ shows the ‘daily texture’ of peasant politics (Scott, 1985; Scott and Kerkvliet, 1986). These works have greatly contributed to the understanding of the political behaviour of peasants. However, the dichotomy in the literature between all-out peasant revolution and ‘everyday politics’ like pilfering and foot-dragging, tends to overlook a large chunk of rural political dynamics — political activities ranging from land occupation, to organization-building, to negotiations with the state (Brockett, 1991: 260; Fox, 1992). Although there have been several studies of these middle-range activities, most are in the context of understanding the revolutionary character of peasants, or how these activities lead to full-scale revolution (for example,

Huizer, 1975). In most cases, however, these mid-range peasant actions do not lead to full-scale revolutions. Peasant collective action requires a perception of shared interests or identities among peasants — ‘a collective process of interpretation, attribution and social construction that mediate opportunity and action’ (McAdam et al., 1996: 2). Peasants usually do not immediately engage in overt actions, as the ‘everyday forms of resistance’ literature demonstrates. Most peasant collective actions are preceded by a general feeling that there is a good chance of goals being realized.²⁹ A further prerequisite to collective action is the opening up of political opportunity. Tarrow (1994: 54) defines political opportunities as ‘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’ (see also Brocket, 1991: 254).

When peasants mobilize, the initial activity is usually confined to the boundaries of their community, because of limited political and logistical resources — this was demonstrated in the Candaba-San Luis case. This level of collective action is rarely sufficient for goals to be achieved, however, chiefly because (in the case of land reform) the landlords resist such reforms at a level far beyond the municipality. When confronted by an initial failure to realize their goals, many peasants recoil, but some persist. The opening up of political opportunities can encourage them to carry their mobilization beyond the municipality. Political opportunities for peasants may come in the form of external allies, who provide political and logistical support that is necessary but frequently inaccessible and unaffordable to peasants. Such allies have their own motivations for supporting the peasants’ demands and actions, ranging from ideological to political to institutional agendas. Even where the pro-reform alliance is vibrant, however, the combined force may still lag behind the resistance of landlords as this escalates and expands, provoked by social mobilization from below into counter-mobilization (see Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996). When this occurs, peasant action may not be sufficient to effect reforms, and state actors may increasingly be drawn into the conflict.

Pro-Reform Initiatives from Above

According to Fox (1993: 10–12), 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’. No single explanation can fully account for the actions of state actors, but as Fox (1993: 30–31) shows, the concept of the twin foundations of state rule of

29. See also Kerkvliet (1990: 191–4, 1993: 485–7).

accumulation and *legitimation* ('the continuation of private capital accumulation and the preservation of some historically conditioned minimum of political legitimacy', respectively) offers useful insights in terms of the broader context in which state actors can exercise autonomy. For example, some state actors oppose land reform on productive estates because they put a premium on the contribution of these farms to national capital accumulation; other state actors may on the other hand invoke issues of 'social justice' or democratization. These two foundations represent two permanent but often contradictory tasks which have to be performed by all state actors. These tasks partly explain why reformists are recruited into the state (generally, in the executive branch, see Fox, 1995). Some state actors are inclined to pursue the state's private capital accumulation interests, while some may value the task of strengthening political legitimacy even more. Others 'may simply be concerned with career advancement or material gain. But this does not mean that state actors are completely free to respond as they wish — they face structural-institutional constraints and 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'. Such state allies, having resources and power, can strengthen social mobilization from below and make their impact greater (Fox, 1993: 29–32). Specifically, these state allies pose a countervailing force against the state allies of the landlords. They provide additional political and logistical support to the peasants, and security against possible violence of other state and non-state actors against the peasants.

Positive Interaction between Pro-Reform Forces within the State and in Society

The process of implementing public policy entails an interaction between state actors and societal actors, despite the latter's usual claim that they are independent groups. Two concepts must be clarified here: independence and autonomy. Independence is largely seen as an absolute 'either/or' question — groups are either co-opted by, or are independent from the state. To be independent means that the internal dynamics of societal organizations are (and can be) insulated from any form of state interference or influence. Meanwhile, autonomy is 'inherently a matter of degree' and refers here to 'the amount of state intervention in the societal actor's internal decision-making' (Fox, 1993: 28). As shown in the periodization of CARP implementation in general and in the history of peasant movements in particular, 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 policy outcomes without close interaction with state actors. Co-opted organizations do not make an important impact since they are basically

administrative adjuncts of the state and can rarely go beyond what the state defines as parameters of actions. Autonomous organizations have more potential. Whilst they are able to penetrate the state from top to bottom and to influence it from within, they can also pull out from such interaction when disengagement is necessary, and preserve themselves when the windows of opportunities close, still retaining some degree of strength from previous interactions with the state which can be utilized for the next 'reformist opening' (see Fox, 1992, 1996).

In some cases, state reformists and pro-reform social groups exist without interacting with each other. In such situations, political opportunities are not harnessed. In other cases, they do interact but instead of supporting each other, they undermine each other: pro-reform forces are then generally weakened and prospects for land reform implementation are remote. As shown in the CARP implementation process, the most promising situation is when the two streams of pro-reform forces interact positively in pursuit of the common goal of implementing land reform, despite differences in agendas and motivations between them. 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) toward a common aim 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 different motivations underlying 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 (see Fox, 1993: 21–32).

Ability to Overcome Landlords' Resistance to Land Reform

Achieving a symbiotic interaction between pro-reform state and societal actors does not automatically lead to land reform implementation. The pro-reform forces have to surmount various anti-reform obstacles. There are a number of ways in which the anti-reform coalition can be weakened, and here the issue of political opportunity is relevant. Tarrow (1994) identifies four important political opportunities: access to power, shifting alignments, 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 of: conversely, even the strong grow weak. Thus, the pro-land reform forces can overcome anti-reform obstacles when their ranks remain solid and persistent, while the landlords may either fail to muster sufficient state allies, may be abandoned by state allies, may face a split from other elites, or may simply be overpowered by the composite force of the pro-reform actors (see Barraclough, 1999; Brocket, 1991). These possibilities are validated by the CARP national experience in general and the case of Candaba-San Luis in particular.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has suggested that the roots of the persistent ‘chicken-and-egg’ dilemma in land reform policy are not as structurally fixed as many activist and academic observers assume them to be. The main lesson drawn from this study is that the outcomes of land reform policy are not determined by either structural or institutional factors alone, or by the actions of state policy elites alone, but that the political actions and strategies of a wide range of state and societal actors also have a bearing on 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, facilitating state expropriation and redistribution of highly contentious private estates to previously landless and near-landless peasants. Fox (1993) calls this a ‘sandwich’ strategy. In Borras (1999), and in the context of the Philippines, it is called ‘*Bibingka*’ strategy.

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Saturnino M. Borras Jr is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Social Studies, PO Box 29776, 2502 LT The Hague, The Netherlands (e-mail: borras@iss.nl). He has been directly involved with militant peasant movements in the Philippines since the early 1980s. His research interests include market-led agrarian reform, decentralization, and peasant movements.