

Contribution to anthology edited by Mohanty&Murkherji with Törnquist

POPULAR POLITICS OF DEMOCRATISATION

Philippine Cases in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective

Olle Törnquist

December 1995*

Uppsala University, Dept. of Government-Development Studies Unit; P.O.Box 514, S-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden - Tele +46-(0)18-18 38 04; Fax 18 19 93; e-mail Olle.Tornquist@uland.uu.se

INTRODUCTION

Only a few decades ago, democratisation in South and Southeast Asia was primarily a question of creating the most essential prerequisites in terms of "constituting the demos". Firstly anti-imperialism to establish independent nation states, thus making it possible for people in the former colonies to govern their own countries. Secondly anti-feudalism and basic improvements for the labourers, thus making people autonomous enough to act in accordance with their own interests and ideas.

Popular left oriented nationalist and communist movements were in the forefront.

By now, however, capitalism is expanding – along with limited forms of democracy – while the predominant political development Project within the Left¹ is in shambles.

Is a new one emerging? What is the importance of democratisation for renewal-oriented radical movements and organisations? And most important, do they carry the potential of anchoring and broadening democracy in the area – just as popular movements, and especially the more organised labour movement, did during the democratisation of Western Europe?

The situation, of course, is very different and varies among the countries. For instance, while the fiscal and institutional base of the state is weakened, surviving rulers and executives re-organise their "fiefdoms" and networks and privatise them further. The separation between state and civil society remains comparatively blurred. The division of labour, the subordination of people, and the appropriation of surplus are extremely complex and contradictory. This breeds individualistic strategies of

*The present essay is part of a larger effort which started in 1991 to compare over time the importance of democratisation for renewal-oriented popular movements and associated organisations in three very different contexts, within India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. I am most thankful to all friends cum colleagues, political leaders and activists in Kerala, Indonesia, and the Philippines who in a spirit of mutual trust and interest in critical ideas, have spent a great deal of time in informative and exciting discussions with me. My more recent studies of the Philippines are primarily based on information collected in April-May 1992 and in April-May 1995. The Research is financed by Uppsala University and the Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries, Sarec.

¹Where nothing else is indicated, "the Left" refers to the Left in general, including left oriented nationalists and communists, as well as new radical popular movements which, firstly, take the aspirations, well-being, and developmental capacity of the weak majority of the population as their fundamental point of departure, and, secondly, claim that this requires collective social organisation and political action.

survival, clientelism, group-specific organisation, and mobilisation on the basis of religious and cultural identities. We are far from a classical protracted industrial and cultural transformation in general and the emergence of a large and comparatively homogeneous working class movement in particular.

More difficulties could be added. But while the situation is, thus, very different from that which enabled radical popular movement and organisation to play a central role in Western European democratisation, this does not exclude the possibility that something similar may come about in South and Southeast Asia for other reasons and determined by other causes.

The essential problem which should be looked into is, therefore, whether the development of actually existing conditions and new movements' and organisations' readings of basic trends might nevertheless (a) generate linkages between the various and often fragmented interests and ideas, and (b) possibly make the politics of democratisation instrumental to the movements and organisations concerned.²

Situating and explaining politics of democratisation

To approach this problematique one needs to study conditions and reasoning on the level of the movements, and especially their propelling leaders and organisations, rather than possible unifying factors generated from outside.³

Similarly, one must start with the importance of politics of democratisation for the movements and organisations, rather than with their relative importance in the overall processes of liberalisation and democratisation in a country.

Furthermore, while it is beyond a reasonable doubt that social movements and popular demands in general (including special interests) are in some way associated with democratisation, the critical question – in view of the Western European experience and the urgent third world problems – is rather if and when democratisation makes sense for *developmental* purposes, among both old and new *leftist* movements and associated organisations. What is their ability to renew, converge, and work out another development Project?

Finally, in trying to challenge the predominant arguments about serious obstacles by pointing to "positive" tendencies that may emerge, it should be fruitful critically to

²The focus is thus on when politics *to promote* democracy make sense, not only when democratic forms of rule as such are instrumental. "Instrumental" does not rule out, of course, the possibility that a movement may stress the importance of democratic values rather than, for instance, material ends – only that we concentrate on when they really find the politics of democratisation to be instrumental for reaching their aims, material or non-material.

³Naturally, one could go still further and begin by close sociological observation of why it is that individuals form movements in the first place. But since our inquiry concerns the politics of democratisation, and since it is reasonable to assume that politics and democratisation only become major issues as movements take shape and become more or less organised, the important initial part of the story is not subject of close attention in this project.

analyse over time theoretically exciting movements and associated organisations which, at least initially, give some priority to politics of democratisation.

*

Consequently, to study when and how movements and associated organisations find politics of democratisation instrumental we shall: (1) analyse their implementation of their own special projects and actions, their mobilisation and organisation of popular support, and the way they handle friends, obstacles and foes; and (2) continuously ask (a) what, if any, politics of democratisation makes sense,⁴ and (b) how this is related to actual conditions and the movements' and organisations' own reading of the basic forces at work.⁵

*

⁴When analysing movements' and associated organisations' politics (including their policies) of democratisation, their statements and activities need to be filtered through a non-partisan conceptualisation of such processes which goes beyond the conventional and usually static definitions of (e.g. liberal) democratic forms of rule. And even though such a concept should be limited, it is not enough to ask *to what extent and in what way the work carried out by the movements and organisations studied is characterised by the essence of democracy – in terms of the sovereignty of the people in accordance with the principle of constitutionally guaranteed political equality among citizens or members, who are independent enough to express their own will.* (Or, if we put it in operational and minimum-procedural terms, government according to rule on the basis of majority decisions among adult citizens or members with one vote each and freedom of expression and organisation.) We also know that this principal point is closely associated with many other factors, which in turn relate to the actual politics of democratisation. A wide classification into four groups of such factors will be indicated below. Their importance and composition may vary from one society or context to another, and scholars as well as actors (such as our movements and organisations) of course have different opinions about them.

A first cluster of factors concerns the preconditions for meaningful democracy. Our next question is thus: *what conditions do the various movements and organisations really give priority to, try to promote, or set aside in their different contexts and over time?* The actual capacity to organise and express opinions, for instance? Human rights? Constitutionalism and the rule of law? Social and economic equality or autonomy – in order that people are able to come forward as candidates and especially to cast their votes in accordance with their opinions, without having to submit to the wishes of their leaders, employers or landlords, dominant propaganda, or intervening governments or armies? And if so, how much of this is regarded as absolutely necessary?

Secondly, *what forms of democracy do the movements and organisations support (or try to avoid)?* For instance, decentralisation of government, extensive participation (direct control), pressure politics, and co-operative efforts instead of, or in addition to representation (indirect control), parties, and participation in national and/or local elections? What (if any) constitutional arrangements are important? And what about the problem of "democratic centralism" within radical organisations?

Thirdly, *the scope or extension of democracy.* Where do the movements and organisations draw the line between state and "civil society"? Do the movements and organisations try to spread democratic forms of government to almost all resources which people have in common? What about democratisation within "civil society"? Within what parts of "civil society"? (Companies? co-operatives? NGOs?...) And who will have the right to vote? Moreover, how do they tackle the problem of monopoly and non-democratic governance of already publicly controlled and regulated resources? Do they resort to privatisation or some kind of democratic rule?

Finally, *the content.* *What democratically decided policies do the movements and organisations find undemocratic, arguing that they run counter to the prerequisites for democracy to be meaningful?* For instance, only policies that undermine basic civil rights – or do they also include measures giving rise to serious inequalities? And do their own ends justify undemocratic means?

⁵The sources, for covering the politics and policies, are comparatively undisputed standard literature and news reports on general developments, and scholarly studies and evaluations, as well as documents and interviews with leading members of the movements and associated organisations; to document problematic and unintended developments, priority is given to "self-critical" evaluations by leaders who could be expected to do their best to defend the policies.

To have a fruitful spectrum, with different conditions and ways of reading them, I have selected movements and associated organisations to be studied from three distinct contexts. One is Kerala – in the framework of the Indian union – representing the cases of centralised nation-state-led development in decay. India's state-regulated mixed economy is deteriorating, and so is its comparatively democratic polity. Structural adjustment has finally been introduced. At the same time, and especially in Kerala, the traditional Left is still quite strong and tries to take alternative paths, some of which call for democratisation, and which partly involve co-operation with new movements and organisations.

The second context is Indonesia, with its highly authoritarian regime and development pattern, which shares certain characteristics with the NIC-models. It accommodates some deregulation and privatisation, but has eliminated the once very strong traditional Left, and resists demands for political liberalisation from, among others, some middle class people, NGOs, and social movements.

Thirdly the context of the Philippines – the main object of this essay – which in a way represent the many cases where outright authoritarian development models ran aground, and were then followed by uneven processes of liberalisation and democratisation, dismantling of the state, further economic crisis, structural adjustment, and so on. The struggle for transition involved, among others, sections of the growing middle class, many NGOs and new movements – while the by then still significant traditional Left insisted on its old revolutionary track. The transition itself and the new institutions, however, were to a large extent captured by powerful political and economic actors.

Hence, one basic query is done in each of the contexts. These are published separately,⁶ before being followed up by restudies and finally integrated in a concluding comparative book. In this essay, however, I try to summarise the main results from the the Philippines only, and to thus integrate the conclusions from basic study (which was presented at the 1992 workshop in New Delhi) with those from the restudy three years later. Finally I have added a brief discussion of what is specific and what is general when we compare the experiences from all the three contexts of Kerala, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

THE PHILIPPINE CASES

Rootless middle class democracy

⁶For the full reports, see Olle Törnquist, "Democratic 'Empowerment' and Democratisation of Politics: Radical Popular Movements and the May 1992 Elections in the Philippines", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No 3, 1993, and *Kasarinlan*, Vol.8:3 and 9:1, 1993; *The Next Left? Democratisation and Attempts to Renew the Radical Political Development Project. The Case of Kerala*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1995 (also forthcoming in *Economic and Political Weekly*); and "Democracy in Indonesia? Problems of Popular Democratisation under Authoritarian Rule" (to be published 1996.)

The perhaps most astounding breakthrough for the third world's new middle class democratic uprisings actually took place in the Philippines in February, 1986. Peaceful mass demonstrations and protests against massive electoral rigging incapacitated the military and brought down the Marcos regime. The communist led "national-democrats" (NDs) and their mainly peasant based New Peoples Army, who until then had continuously gained strength, swiftly lost the initiative. Corazon Aquino became the new president. Economic and political liberties were saluted. The Philippines became in vogue in the international aid market.

Much of the polity, however, continues to be almost a caricature of the individualising, personality-oriented and ideology resistant American settler-democracy – which was exported to the former US colony and was then conformed with and taken advantage of by feudal-like clans and bosses who, moreover, retain some remnants of Spanish and Chinese culture. The point of departure in the basic study was that, even if much of the old socio-economic basis of the restored Philippine "cacique democracy" is falling apart, solid new forms are failing to appear. At the time of the full scale elections of 1992, the widely esteemed middle-class democratisation still had no solid foundation, including reasonably clear-cut representation of different interests and ideas of societal change.⁷

For instance, despite the fact that traditional politicians like the main frontrunner in the 1992 presidential race, Ramon Mitra, finally made a fiasco with only 15% of the votes (despite the blessings of Cardinal Sin, as well as the most extensive network of somewhat undermined but still powerful political bosses all over the country, and the most efficient election machinery), few if any serious issues were crucial; and one can hardly say that people went for clean and outstanding politicians with good records representing their interests and ideas. The winner of the presidential elections, but only with 24 % of the votes, was a general, Fidel Ramos, who was the head of the constabulary under Marcos until he abandoned the sinking ship, jumping to that of "Cory" Aquinos instead, and then was marketed – by the administration in office – as her "Steady Eddie" (implying continuity and increased stability). Second came Miriam Defensor-Santiago with 20 % of the votes – a crossbreed of Ross Perot and Maggie Thatcher – who was carried along by media and the almost infantile message that all evil is due to corruption and can be curbed if politicians are locked up and businessmen given all possible liberties. And almost as many votes (18 %) were given to Eduardo Cojuangco, Marcos' foremost crony-capitalist with endless resources (and full support from the only fairly stable voting block left, that of *Iglesia ni Cristo*). He may even have become the new president if Imelda Marcos had not also decided to

⁷The president, vice-president, and 12 senators are elected at the national level for a period of 6 years. 12 other senators are elected for 3 years. All the others are also elected for 3 years: 200 congressmen representing various constituencies; 73 governors, 1 600 mayors and almost 14 000 municipal, city and provincial councillors.

run. She managed to attract 10 % of the votes, more than what had been expected. But now it was thus Ramos who won the day. Furthermore, an old movie star within Cojuangco's camp, Joseph Estrada, became the new vice-president. The nationally elected senate was also decorated with various personalities (usually with roots in the most densely populated parts of the country), among whom a comedian, Vicente "Tito" Sotto, got the most votes.

Moreover, modified patronage and machines were still very important in the elections of congressmen (representing various constituencies), governors, and mayors. Also, vote-buying and electoral rigging were most frequent at this level. Suddenly, local elections had in fact become critical. Much of the central state powers that had not already been privatised were about to be decentralised. Consequently many bosses gave priority to their own fiefdoms, while the presidential and senatorial elections ranked second in importance to them.

Therefore – because of the rootless middle-class democratisation – the most vital question by 1992 was rather whether and how new popular movements and organisations could instead become vital in anchoring democracy.

*

In this respect little changed in the three years, between the elections of May 1992 and those in May 1995, when the Filipinos returned to the polls in order to elect local politicians, governors, congressmen and 12 senators.⁸

It is true that the decentralisation of political power has created some space. But it has been grabbed in most cases by political bosses and their business associates.⁹

It is also true that the persisting problems of a rootless democratisation have meant that the diffusion of public resources has been less than predicted, as has the difficulty for the personalities-cum-politicians to form powerful blocks and offer stable political and economic leadership. The Ramos administration, of course, has been incapable of creating even the basic preconditions for the transformation of the Philippines into another developmental state of the Far East. Even so, it has managed to reach compromises with contending political groups, to strike deals with national and international business groups, and to reorient the country away from the former colonial power and towards Asia. So despite the lack of structural change, the result has at least been to enable the Philippines to be towed a bit forward by the expansive neighbouring economies, despite the fact that productive investments are lagging behind. In the process, moreover, a kind of political stability has emerged. However, all this also generates further problems of democratisation. With a combination of

⁸Cf. fn. 7 above!

⁹Information and analyses related to the situation in 1995 is based on materials collected in between 1992 and 1995 and interviews made in April-May 1992, primarily with the same persons as in 1992, with the valuable assistance of Ms. Maricris Valte. References and the full results will only be included in the concluding comparative book from the project.

weak idea cum interest based parties and organisations, new elitist horse-trading and finally some economic growth, there was simply no fertile soil for *any* powerful opposition in the course of the 1995 elections. Several of the dominant local candidates even ran unopposed.

*

So what happened instead, then, to the popular efforts at alternative development *with and through further democratisation* which we found more important to follow already by the early-90's?

From rigid old Left to renewal-oriented movements

In the late-80's and early-90's the Left as a whole was still dominated by the old mainstream NDs ("national democrats"). For most of them, political democratisation in general and electoral politics in particular were simply not meaningful.¹⁰ The political and economic liberalisation, they said, did not mean much. The basic relations of power had not changed. The social and economic inequalities were still so severe that a majority of the citizens simply could not vote in accordance with their own interests.¹¹ Moreover, the NDs added, further *political* democratisation would not help much to alter those relations of power and inequalities. Politicians, administrators and so-called "bureaucratic capitalists" had no real bases of power of their own which could be hit at by way of political democratisation. They continued instead to rely on the more powerful imperialists, compradors, and landlords with private sources of power who must be tackled head on by other means. Even if more progressive people were elected, they would not have access to much resources and almost no room of manoeuvre. Besides using elections for propaganda purposes and some horse-trading, one must therefore, the argument continued, hold on to extra-parliamentary and often armed struggles against landlords, capitalists and other fundamental enemies. Also, this required, of course, rather authoritarian but still enlightened leadership – at the expense of democratic principles within the movement as well as equal cooperation with other progressive movements.

*

By 1992, however, the NDs themselves were in serious crisis.¹² Since some time the armed units were on the defensive, popular support was dwindling, and the logistical problems were severe. Many of the leading members had been rounded up or had opted for other forms of struggle. Old theses and strategies were being questioned,

¹⁰In relation to the following, Cf. Törnquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left", in *Kasarinlan* (University of the Philippines) Vol. 6, No 1-2 (1990); also in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), Vol. XXVI No. 27-28 and 29, 1991.

¹¹This argument is now also found in the otherwise "flexible" statement by the National Democratic Front's (NDF) former chairperson Mr. Satur Ocampo to an open forum held at University of the Philippines, August 29, 1991. See *Kasarinlan* Vol.7:2-3, 1992 pp. 177-80.

¹²The following is mainly based on interviews with sympathisers, concerned dissidents and analysts who must remain anonymous.

especially, but not only, within the legal branches of the movement.¹³ The members were far from an agreement on what to reconsider and how to go ahead. There was an obvious risk that this could lead to full scale disintegration, especially since many progressive members who had invested most of their life in the movement quite naturally found it difficult to change or give up without substantial achievements or new options. Therefore, concerned dissidents were eager not to push the debate too far, to stand provocation from orthodox and stubborn leaders, and to contribute instead to the negotiation of a sensible settlement with the government. And *if* this could be achieved there should be much more space for fresh alternatives, especially among the many ND organisations for peasants, workers, and urban poor as well as within "their" cause-oriented groups and NGOs.

In face of the 1992 elections most NDs were not yet prepared to step outside the old fold. Only certain leaders within the open sections of the movement tried to stress important issues, to bet on "electoral education" and to endorse "progressive candidates".¹⁴ However, the crisis within the ND movement had also contributed to more democratic forms of cooperation among the many dissidents within the Left.¹⁵ ND leaders were no longer hegemonic. Many oppositional groups felt more self-confident than before. Despite all problems and assorted bad experiences, many agreed there was a need for broad unity. And even if a wide front was not possible to arrive at before the 1992 elections, at least three "soft" or renewal-oriented sections of the Left took elections seriously – for the first time for decades. They were able to initiate electoral cooperation and to work smoothly with each other.

*

¹³Cf. e.g.. the discussion in the new magazine *Debate: Philippine Left Review*, from March 1991 and onwards, and the articles in *Kasarinlan* Vol. 8, no 1

¹⁴For instance, in 1991, they made an attempt to revive the legal national democratic party *Partido ng Bayan*. (See e.g. the interview with Etta Rosales and her own "The Dilemma of Liberal Democracy", in *Conjuncture*, Vol. V, No 2, and No 3 1992 respectively.) Furthermore, in early April the next year, "their own" movements were brought together in a separate non-partisan electoral committee, *Kapatiran, Kilusan ng Alternatibong Pulitika para sa Inang Bayan*, with some 40 organisations (including *Bayan*, New Democratic Alliance) to "reinforce the people's organised strength in projecting major issues" (quoted from *Coalition corner*, published by the Institute for Popular Democracy, 3 April 1992).

¹⁵In this section of the essay, when nothing else is specified, I am mainly drawing on interviews (in den Hague February 7, 1992 and in the Philippines from mid April till mid May 1992) with leaders and activists related to the *Akbayan* movement – including Randolph David, Karina Constantino-David, Ed de la Torre, Ronald Llamas, Gerry Bulatao, Clark Soriano, Bong Malonzo, Jurgette Honculade, Isagani Serrano, Lisa Dacanay, Arman Alforque and Gwen Ngolaban – as well as on related articles and documents such as in *Conjuncture*, Vol IV - Vol V, 1991-1992, platform and campaign materials of the *Akbayan* (and its local partner in Cebu), documents related to the electoral work and institute of Bisig (including "Bisig's orientation to Parliamentary struggle", "Tentative workplan: Bisig electoral work", "Proposal for a three-year trajectory for Bisig", "Electoral education program for Popular organisations" "Institute for electoral education: progress report") and eg. Rene Ciria Cruz' talk in the Hague 7 February 1992 "Why the Philippine Left must take the Parliamentary Road, reproduced in *Debate: Philippine Left Review*, No 2, March 1992; Cf. also the interview with him in *Conjuncture*, Vol IV:4, April 1991. I have also benefitted from a drafted version of Eric Gutierrez' case study of 1992 electoral coalitions within IPD's coalition research project.

These "three little pigs" – as opposed to the "ND wolf" – included the socialist Bisig-movement¹⁶, the rethinking social democrats of *Pandayan*¹⁷, and the similarly rethinking former NDs of the Movement for Popular Democracy. None of them were thus parties, but rather groups promoting slightly different ideas about "new politics".¹⁸ Also, those political blocks linked up with like-minded cause-oriented groups, NGOs, and interest organisations (such as unions) to form a partisan electoral movement, *Akbayan*. They adopted the core elements of the "popular development agendas" generated by various broad progressive movements (in which NDs are also participating) as their own programme. And the keywords were "people's interest", "participatory democracy", "sustainable development" and "genuine structural reforms".¹⁹ In the spirit of realism, *Akbayan* also became part of the liberal electoral coalition, *Koalisyon Pambans*, National Coalition. This was actually brokered by leading members of the "three little pigs".²⁰ It was the only block with some ideological profile, radical propositions and progressive candidates, at least on the national level, who included the generally respected senators Jovito "Jovy" Salonga, ex-speaker of the senate and responsible for carrying through the anti-US-bases treaty campaign, and Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel, primus motor in decentralising state powers, as presidential candidates; plus, for instance, the radical nationalist senator Wigberto "Bobby" Tanada and consistent NGO spokesman and expelled agrarian secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad as senatorial candidates. There was also an exciting attempt among a broad group of generally progressive NGOs to gradually intervene in politics – the so-called project 2001.²¹ This time, however, almost the only thing they could agree on was partisan "electoral education", including information of what candidates could be expected to support the aims and means of the NGOs.

*

¹⁶*Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa*; The Alliance for the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Action.

¹⁷*Pandayan para sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas*; Workshop for a Socialist Philippines

¹⁸Moreover, they are almost exactly the progressive forces within the Left that were identified in an earlier paper (Törnquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left", *op.cit.*) as those most likely to propel democracy – which in turn made me select two of my local cases for closer study within the folds of Bisig and the Movement for Popular Democracy (MPD) or the "popular democrats". And while "my" third propelling force (led by Dante Buscayno) was not directly involved in this new cooperation, it was instead most active locally, and we shall return to that movement, as well as to the Bisig and MPD-related local cases, later on in the essay.

¹⁹*Akbayan* adopted the development agenda generated by the National Peace Conference, People's Caucus, Green Forum, Project 2001, and CODE-NGO. Cf. also *People's Agenda for Development and Democracy* Ateneo Centre for Social Policy and Public Affairs, Ateneo de Manila University, 1992.

²⁰See Platform for Participatory Democracy and Sustainable Development of the *Koalisyon Pambansa*, in *Conjuncture*, Vol V No 2, 1992.

²¹Cf. *Project 2001, An Electoral Movement of the NGO Community* (Mimiographed Statement 1992?), *Project 2000: NGO intervention in the electoral process*, Talk by Florencio Abad, 26 February 1991, Reproduced in *Conjuncture*, Vol IV:4, 1991, plus his talk at an open forum at University of the Philippines August 29, 1991, Reproduced in *Kasarinlan*, Vol 7:2-3, pp.180-83, and "New Politics as the Art of Combining and Balancing" talk by Gerry Bulatao, Sec. general of Project 2001, 7 Sept. 1991.

In contrast to the mainstream national democratic view, the *Akbayan* people maintained, thus, that a minimum of prerequisites for a meaningful democracy actually existed after the fall of Marcos – despite all the social and economic inequalities. Moreover, further democratisation, they said, would be of critical importance in helping them to alter the Philippine path of development. This was not because their reading of the fundamental social and economic forces at work had been modified. They still maintained that the important sources of power were outside the state and not subject to political competition. For instance, few references were made to analyses indicating that one of the reasons for the importance of electoral struggles was that politicians and bureaucrats monopolised vital resources which should be democratically governed. On the contrary, almost everyone was eager to stress that the new politics of democratisation were subordinated to their old basic work as unionists, development activists and so on. This work, they said, was the only way to alter the relations of power in society and thereby to create, at the same time, more favourable preconditions for democracy. Most of the *Akbayan* people had previously limited themselves to lobbying and pressure politics; viz. extra-parliamentary politics. For many leaders, especially within the NGOs, this went hand in hand with struggles against the authoritarian state by supporting people's own initiatives in "civil society" rather than trying to grab state power. And demands for participatory democracy were added. Thus, it was only on top of this that the *Akbayan* people agreed now to *supplement* pressure politics and development and democratic activism by making use of their work and confidence among people also to mobilise votes for progressive representatives.

Challenging results

What were the immediate results?²² As mentioned above, the renewal-oriented Left had tried to be realistic in brokering and associating with the coalition and its electoral machine. But this apparatus soon proved economically and organisationally weak. Some politicians defected to rival camps with more resources. The campaign lost momentum. There was not even enough money to feed the devoted poll-watchers in some cases, (even though related Christian groups did their part of the job). So the poor and inexperienced renewal-oriented Left found itself in the midst of something much more exacting and burdensome than what they had asked for. In the late night hours, several overstrained leaders and activists even remarked with a smile, that as it turned out they could almost just as well have launched their own candidates.

Moreover, most of the *Akbayan* people themselves were usually busy with development work, unionism etc. which were not linked to partisan politics and

²²In this section I am drawing mainly on the same interviews and materials as those mentioned in fn. 15 above *plus* on more local interviews and documents regarding *Akbayan* related work in Cebu and in Bataan – to which I shall return in more detail later on in this article.

especially not to electoral politics. Their campaign work was therefore a different task which could not be attended to until very late. Many activists did not find time for the campaign. Further delay was caused by the various negotiations with the other progressive groups and movements that they tried to bring into the coalition. Locally, there were often more progressive candidates outside the folds of liberal coalition than inside. This further complicated things and called for supplementary forms of cooperation. On top of this came the uphill task of convincing people, whom the Left had been telling for years and years that it did not matter which way they voted, that this time it really would make a difference. As a result, rival candidates gained a lot of votes even from people who otherwise fought them, for instance within a union or an action group. Outright vote-buying could not be resisted. And electoral rigging was still possible in some places.

Finally, since the renewal-oriented Left basically carried along the same issues they used to emphasise in their extra-parliamentary work and paid little attention to the problem of how to govern public resources and of implementing their great ideas, the field was open for neo-liberal populists like Miriam Santiago to exploit the general discontent with traditional politicians and rampant corruption.

Consequently, the results in terms of numbers of votes were quite disappointing. If we limit ourselves to the national scene, Salonga and Pimentel, for instance, seem to have done rather well in areas given priority to by the renewal-oriented Left. But altogether Salonga got only about the same share of votes as Imelda Marcos (10%). And the foremost NGO senatorial candidate Butch Abad remained out in the cold. Just one official liberal (although radical) nominee slipped into the senate, Bobby Tanada – perhaps partly because he was the only candidate who was also acceptable among traditional NDs.

The disintegration of the Left continues to delay the rise of fresh new alternatives

By 1995 there had been further disintegration among the previously dominant leftist force, the NDs. The NDs do no longer play a significant role on the national level. The Maoists who keep up the armed struggle even seem unable to negotiate reasonable deals with the government. New alternatives were about to develop among the various dissidents who dismantled the old leaders. But after some time a deadlock arose between well organised and mainly labour based "urban insurrectionists", who try to be good Leninists, and partially renewal oriented but rather disorganised intellectuals and activists from various sectors. These conflicts have also prevented much of the fresh new thinking and dynamics that many had hoped would grow out of joint efforts between the new dissidents and the many left oriented groups (including those we study) who had abandoned various traditional bandwagons much earlier.

The Ramos administration, meanwhile, has done better than expected, thus leaving little room for spontaneous mass opposition.²³

In addition, therefore, the attempts by some of the old dissidents to start anew on their own, which we analysed in the basic study, have been negatively affected and delayed. The 1992 electoral movement *Akbayan*, for instance, was not sustained, and no similar effort at joint action was made in the 1995 elections. If a new scheduled party-list system for very limited proportional representation in the Congress (in addition to the present simple-majority elections in single-member constituencies) had been implemented before the elections, the renewal-oriented Left might have participated. But of course it was postponed. Hence, the various groups set joint issues and organisation aside, and limited themselves to supporting various "reasonable" individual candidates instead, hoping to gain some experience and influence thereby. In the senatorial race, for instance, *Bisig* backed the rather radical principal author of the local government and co-operative codes, former vice-presidential candidate Nene Pimentel (who lost), while the popular democrats did most of the campaigning for president Ramos' widely acclaimed secretary of health, media favourite Juan Flavio (who made it).

Popular movements and democratisation from below

To get an idea about conceivable linkages between attempts at alternative paths of development and growth of genuine and powerful popular movements propelling democratisation in trying to reach their aims, it is necessary to turn to some more specific local cases, following them over time. After a brief presentation of the cases, I shall summarise the main tendencies and developments identified in the basic study from 1992 and the restudy from 1995.

*

Two cases are local chapters within the folds of the already discussed Movement for Popular Democracy, the "popular democrats", and the socialist *Bisig*-movement, in the province of Bataan and in Cebu City respectively. The third example is the cooperative efforts of founding commander of the New Peoples Army, Bernabe Buscayno, and his People's Livelihood Foundation in Central Luzon. Despite the fact that these politically significant movements in vital parts of the country have much of their roots within the traditional Left that did not focus on democratisation, they have nevertheless began to seriously do so since the mid' 80s.

The popular democrats are usually associated with leading dissidents of the traditional Left such as Edicio de la Torre and Horacio Morales.²⁴ In the mid' 80s,

²³See fn. 9 above!

²⁴Father "Ed." de la Torre among other things initiated the Christians for National Liberation in the early' 70s; Horacio "Boy" Morales was, among other things, the celebrated head of Marcos' prestigious Development Academy before he defected when he was to be awarded as one of the "ten outstanding

they retreated from communist-led fronts and worked out platforms for broad coalitions, including the use of elections, against president Marcos and for the development of non-elitist or "popular democracy". The present Movement for Popular Democracy grew out of committed middle-class professionals, industrialists and intellectuals.²⁵ As their post-Marcos coalitions did not generate substantial gains from either critical support of the early Aquino government or from participation in the 1987 elections, their efforts to help vulnerable people to become reasonably autonomous citizens were increased. This was namely identified as a basic prerequisite for the development of democracy. The most important national umbrella-institutions are the mainly research and political policy oriented Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) and the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) which initiate and service development projects and grassroots organisations simultaneously with efforts to promote coalitions and "people's councils". Their intentions are perhaps best reflected locally through the PRRM-work designed and till recently led by Isagani Serrano and Lisa Dacanay in the province of Bataan, the peninsula northeast of Manila Bay.²⁶

Bisig, or the Alliance for the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Action, was founded in May 1986 by radical socialists and Marxists with various backgrounds, including Christian social democracy, trade union work, community activism, concerned scholarship, and the new as well as old communist movements.²⁷ Bisig is followed here by focusing on its electoral institute (which is partly supported by the Swedish labour movement²⁸) and the concrete work of two Bisig-related NGOs based in Cebu City in the Visayas. These are the Fellowship for Organising Endeavours (FORGE) and the Cebu Labour Education Research Centre (CLEAR) which promote community development and organisation among urban poor plus some fisherfolk, and union work respectively.

Finally, Bernabe "Dante" Buscayno's cooperative efforts in Tarlac, Central Luzon – which is exactly where poor peasants first fought hard against the Japanese

young men" in 1977 and rebuilt instead the communist-led National Democratic Front until he was imprisoned in 1982.

A somewhat more comprehensive analysis of the popular democrats are found in Törnquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left", op.cit.

²⁵Who first spoke of themselves as Volunteers for Popular Democracy.

²⁶For a general introduction, see *Bataan: A Case Study on Ecosystem Approach to Sustainable Development in the Philippines* (Quezon City, PRRM, 1992)

²⁷Among the personalities are trade union leader "Bong" Malonzo, and professors "Randy" David, "Dodong" Nemenzo and Karina Constantino-David; also TV-talk-show-host, columnist, and senior community development organiser respectively. For a somewhat more comprehensive analysis and further references, see Törnquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left", op.cit. See also *The Socialist Vision and Other Documents* (Quezon City, Bisig, 1987) and relevant parts of fn. 15 above.

²⁸I'd like to thank Jan Hodann of the AIC (International Centre of the Swedish Labour Movement for fruitful discussions.

occupation and neo-colonial governments, and then formed the New Peoples Army in 1969.²⁹

While in prison (1976-1986), Dante produced new ideas but failed to change the line of the NDs even after the fall of Marcos and even though he was the Left senatorial candidate in the 1987 elections who gained the most votes. He returned to Tarlac to start anew among peasants who had forced Marcos to implement a partial land reform, but were now facing exploitative businessmen with good political contacts and control of inputs, rice-mills, marketing, etc. The small farmers would have to come together. The new liberties under Mrs. Aquino, and useful contacts with her, made it possible to organise in late 1988 a NGO-foundation, ask for government credits, and initiate legal cooperation among some 500 suspicious but loyal petty farmers. Already two years later, the results were phenomenal: some 8000 farmers with individual plots³⁰, efficient and collective use of modern inputs and methods; drastically increased production; collective market arrangements, lesser indebted farmers and better paid workers, new jobs, a collective rice-mill, a duck-farm, a fish-pond, and production of organic fertilisers; government credits repaid ahead of schedule... And while problems then included the devastating Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991, there was also a lot of reconstruction work and active participation in the recent local elections.

*

My conclusions from following these cases from the early-90's till 1995 may now be summarised in the five sections below. Each section begins with the salient points from the basic essay followed by those from the restudy.³¹

²⁹For a more comprehensive analysis than the following, see Törnquist, "Fighting for Democracy in the Philippines", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 30, 1990 and Törnquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left", op.cit.

³⁰Actually, the cooperative efforts encompassed larger areas than the famous nearby huge sugar-growing hacienda Luisita which is partially owned by Mrs. Aquino and cover some 6000 ha. While the cooperative efforts are, of course, endowed with less capital, they continued to expanded even more.

³¹References for the situation about 1992: (A) Interviews in April and May 1992 with Isagani Serrano, Lisa Dacanay, Ed. de la Torre, and discussions with community organisers in Bataan, plus Bataan (1992), and documents such as the "PRRM Rural Development and Democratisation Program of 1988", the ditto proposal for 1991, the "Program Status Report (January - August, 1990)", "the SRDDP-Bataan Area Perspective Plan for 1992-1996", "Bataan Province as an Area of Intervention for SRDDP (1991)", "SRDDP-Bataan Proposed Operations Plan for 1992", and the writings of Serrano, including "A Community Empowerment Strategy for Sustainable Development" (1991) and "A Popular Democratic Agenda for Transformation" (1991). (B) Observations and interviews and discussions just before the 1992 elections.in Cebu City (and on the island of Pandanon where FORGE has initiated cooperatives among poor fisherfolks) with Ms. Gwen Ngolaban, Arman Alforque and several organisers and election campaign workers of FORGE and CLEAR plus on documents referred to by them (supplemented by discussions before and after the elections with Ronald Llamas and other *Akbayan* campaign leaders and with Karina Constantino-David, central Bisig leader and senior community organiser and theoretician). Also correspondence with Ms Ngolaban and "Initial evaluation of Bisig-Cebu's electoral involvement, May 17, 1992", and interviews and discussions with Bong Malonzo, leader of National Federation of Labour (mainly on April 28, 1992), and Jurgette Honculade, also of NFL; both also related to Bisig. (C) Previous analyses in Törnquist, "Fighting for Democracy in the Philippines", and "Democracy and the Philippine Left", op.cit. – based on observations and interviews plus correspondence with at first hand Dante and Fatima Buscayno. Moreover: observations

**(1) Bargaining power by carrying out labour & focus on the use
and control of resources**

According to the basic study, the new movements and organisations usually begin by addressing people's immediate problems of survival and development on the local level. This is in contrast to previously dominating leftist ideas of first trying to get hold of political power, which could then be used to redistribute essential means of production such as land. Their reasoning implies that people can enhance their bargaining power by carrying out labour, in addition to their usually employed ability to block production. In the famous case of the co-operative efforts of former New People's Army commander "Dante" Buscayno, the productive interests ascribed to the farmers have even been stressed to such an extent that critics have spoken of "economism".

Moreover, the attempts at promoting production seem to generate an interest in the availability, management, and control of necessary resources. Again, one example is "Dante" Buscayno's attempts to reorganise and improve the lives of small farmers in Tarlac, Central Luzon. Here clear-cut class struggles over land are no more. But the focus is on the efficient use and co-operative control of many other vital resources, such as inputs, credit, water, milling, transportation, etc. The same holds true where plantation workers no longer have strong capitalists to fight, but must try instead to save their jobs by taking over more or less abandoned companies. And community organising is usually based on how people can make best use of their own minor resources, while also dealing with those who monopolise, e.g., the land where people have to live or the water they must drink.

Hence, while the renewal-oriented groups go beyond conventional class conceptions and acknowledge the importance of many different issues and movements – but cannot point out a clear-cut social basis or similar material interests – their activities nevertheless indicate a common focus on the use and control of material resources. And this, as we shall see, has a clear bearing on the importance of democratisation.

*

plus interviews and discussions with at first hand Dante Buscayno and special assistant Fatima Buscayno plus with Boy Palad, vice mayor candidate of the Capas coalition sponsored by the cooperative, and Meg Feliciano, then head of the O'Donnell resettlement camp (later on expelled) and councillor candidate in Concepcion, and some other leaders and workers within the cooperative. I am also thankful for discussions with prof. Cynthia Bautista, who has planned research and done close observations in Tarlac just after the Mt Pinatubo eruption, asst.prof. Teresa Encarnacion, who has spent several months with the cooperative collecting information – see her *The NGO as a Vehicle of Empowerment: the Buscayno Experiment*, Draft-report within the Joint Philippine-Dutch research project on Agrarian Issues in Central Luzon, University of the Philippines, 1992. which has been most useful in my attempts at learning more about the farmers-debt-problems and the critique of Dante's style of leadership – and prof. Randolph David, discussant of a drafted version of this research report when presented in U.P in late April 1992.

References for the situation 1992-1995, see fn. 9 above!

During the following three years there was no basic change in the overall approach of trying to address people's immediate problems on the local level by encouraging them to enhance their bargaining power by carrying out labour for their own purposes, rather than – as the previously dominant strategy entailed – of trying to obtain political power first, by drawing on people's ability to protest and to abstain from carrying out labour for others.³² And most of those efforts continue to be initiated by NGOs which support various popular initiatives such as co-operatives; initiatives which in turn may or may not be related to interest organisations like peasants movements or trade unions. Friction remains between various NGOs, however, as well as between comparatively well-endowed and non-membership based NGOs on the one hand, and poor popular organisations like unions on the other. Really good showcases, finally, are still lacking.

These developmental attempts continue, moreover, to generate an interest in the availability, management, and control of necessary resources, an interest going beyond the previous fixation with struggling over the more narrowly defined means of production owned by a capitalist or landlord and worked by labourers or tenants. And even while democratisation still does not make much sense when it comes to try to seek funds and protection for getting new alternatives started, it usually does make sense in the direct promotion and running of alternative projects.

(2) Democratisation instrumental for improving people's capacity to use and control resources

According to the basic study it is true, of course, that democratisation does not make much sense when groups need external funds and political protection to get new alternatives started. The traditional Left has rarely been a fruitful and sufficiently powerful alternative partner. Now it is falling apart as well. Hence, foreign and private domestic funding is instead widespread. Access to central as well as local state or private support usually involves clientelism (though several NGOs and popular organisations act skilfully on the comparatively large and open "markets"). This patronage is one of the new movements' and organisations' weakest points.

Once on their way, however, democratic organising, management and co-operation seem so far to be instrumental for directly promoting people's "empowerment" and living conditions, precisely by enhancing their own capacity to use and control vital resources.

Alternative projects have been set up mainly outside the framework of the state and the established political organisations – in "civil society". There are two very different models for going about this. On the one hand, time-consuming education, "conscientisation", and small-scale projects with participatory democracy

³²This may even become more important as most of the new growth is within tertiary and informal sectors rather than within formally organised production.

supplemented by coalition building. On the other hand, democratic guidance of large projects based on calculated interests and practical experiences (to prepare the ground rapidly for further politics of democratisation).

*

The large-scale co-operative efforts of "Dante" Buscayno in Tarlac was the model case of the second category. This partially collapsed between 1992 and 1994. At hindsight the depressing outcome may even be seen as the best example of the need for more "internal" democratisation.³³ Of course, the Mt. Pinatubo eruption devastated most of the co-operative land, made efficient rice cultivation impossible, and caused enormous hardship and financial losses for the individual farmers and the co-operative as such. And neither these losses nor the extensive funds and uncountable working hours put in by the co-operative in relief and reconstruction work in the area as a whole have even been shared by the government.

But natural disasters and an unfriendly government do not explain why the co-operative was unable to handle these formidable problems in a better way. Some may put the blame on the co-operative's indisputably poor business management³⁴ – and there is much to this. But as a primary explanation it is shallow and technocratic. Many of the managerial problems were actually due to the imaginative and dynamic leadership of Dante and his team, without which the co-operative efforts would never have come about in the first place. The lack of checks and balances upon this propelling force was primarily the result of minimal democratic participation from below rather than inefficient business management from above. And the main reason why Dante gave no priority to democratic participation was (as pointed out already in the basic study) that he overestimated the joint material interests of the members. He assumed they were peasants, and that they were eager to work hard and efficiently once they got access to the necessary resources. They would, in the process, achieve greater consciousness, assume the functions of management, and act politically. But most of the members had no clear-cut material interests even in paying back their loans or in other ways maintaining the efforts of the co-operative.

Therefore, while the failure of Dante's own attempt rapidly to combine development work (based on material interests that turned out to be more complicated than expected) with political intervention does *not* prove he was wrong to stress the insufficiency of efforts restricted to deepening civil society and emphasising

³³The Mt. Pinatubo eruption devastated most of the land; it has been impossible to reclaim loans to the farmers; the government no longer backs the cooperative; the Land Bank has pulled out; the ricemill can only be used a few months per year; the scale of the cooperative has been reduced from about 1,500 ha to 300 ha, and among the side activities from 11 cooperative stores to 5.

³⁴Cf. Maria V. Montelibano, *The Right to Option: The Right of All. Tarlac Integrated Livelihood Cooperative's (TILCO) Organizational and Management Imperatives*, Institute of Public Management, Development Academy of the Philippines, 1994.

democratic participation, it *does* indicate that much of these efforts are necessary as a basis for further advances.

We must also now add that, even if (as discussed in the basic essay) Dante and his team were already aware by mid-1992 of the need to integrate the members in the running of the co-operative, the continuous hardship – caused by Mt. Pinatubo, a lost local election, the new unfriendly government, and the undemocratic institutional logic and poor management within the co-operative itself – made it impossible swiftly to alter the situation.

It is true that the greatly reduced co-operative is now (May 1995) doing reasonably well, primarily by growing sugar. One again many want to join. But there is little room either for productive or for political expansion. Efficient rice agriculture is very difficult because of ash falls and lahars. Most of the previous rice-farming members are out, are suffering and are unable to pay off their debts to the co-operative. Even if the cultivation of sugar is profitable, moreover, the market is limited. And while rice demanded continuous co-operation in the fields – thus making it possible to initiate other forms of joint action as well – sugar does not require this. Ideally, therefore, there should also be large-scale and popularly organised environmental relief work recovering fertile land, such as by way of reforestation in the mountains. This could bring many of the poor workers and tenants of Tarlac together once again, and on the basis of a green project benefiting the province as a whole even link them up with the middle classes.

(3) Democratic development work could not be transformed into votes

According to the basic study, the rigidity of the traditional Left and its political development Project thus caused the innovative sections to try to build their own organisations and movements on the basis of rather scattered and rarely converging grass-roots projects. The increasingly serious crisis of the old Left, however, should open up space for fresh alternatives. By the early-90's it had at least contributed to more democratic forms of co-operation within the Left as a whole. But even in the face of the 1992 full scale elections, as we know, a broad front was not possible. Only the renewal-oriented "soft" sections came together. And the result was not too encouraging.

However, at least to my knowledge, no important organisation or leader claimed the outcome to indicate, after all, that they no longer had to use elections to gain legitimacy and defend their own work, that minimum prerequisites for democracy really did not exist, and that further democratisation would not be of critical importance in their struggle for an alternative path of development. On the contrary, many more leaders than before added and stressed instead that the ongoing decentralisation of state powers to provinces and municipalities – as provided for by

the Local Government Code of 1991³⁵ – would make it both necessary for progressive grassroots organisations to engage themselves in local politics and possible for them to play a significant role. Firstly, they said, it would be necessary because a lot of important resources and powers would be allocated to local politicians and bureaucrats, and because the local political arena would be crucial. So if the renewal-oriented Left did not try to enter into that playground and stand up for popular interests, people would simply have to link up with other groups and various patrons instead – while the leftists would be marginalised in the backyard. Secondly, they claimed, it would be possible to do this since the code itself stipulated, among other things, that NGO representatives should constitute no less than one-fourth of the local development councils. And when it come to local political candidates, the grassroots organisations should be better equipped to mobilise support *and* to keep track of them than national politicians.

I myself concluded, however, that if the renewal-oriented Left should be able to really affect and alter local and eventually even national politics and policies, it was absolutely vital that its certified capacity to carry out actions and alternative development work to "empower" people could be transformed into votes and influence within the political system. The most serious problem was, that the 1992 elections clearly demonstrated that this could hardly be achieved with only temporary electoral alliances and campaign machineries. That kind of politics has rather proved to be the home ground for political clans, bosses, and machines, as well as increasingly important media-personality-candidates.

In other words, while the recent failure in Tarlac now testifies to the need for democratising the popular ventures themselves as a basis for extended politics of democratisation, a still more decisive and frustrating problem – which was identified already in the basic study – was that this necessary precondition neither sufficed nor gave rise to a wider democratisation of local government, state and society at large. In many cases the local actions and specific development efforts had contributed to the deepening of civil society and the emergence of a democratic culture.³⁶ But these actions and efforts did not converge to generate broader issues and perspectives transcending special views and interests. And they did not generate votes even for local political projects. By 1992, accordingly, the new non-traditional politics seemed restricted to the US model of lobbying, pressuring and forming temporary alliances behind individual (traditional) candidates.

The renewal-oriented Left could of course always advocate constitutional reforms and a new electoral system. Yet, since a lot of powerful interests are vested in the present set-up, it would in reality either have to adjust or fight it out. That is, either

³⁵Republic Act No.7160, 1991. The act took effect on January 1, 1992.

³⁶Cf. the now most fashionable ideas of 'social capital' pioneered by Robert Putnam in his *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.

continue along an enlightened US model or try to transform the system from within. And as far as I could see in 1992, the latter was what most leaders seemed to have in mind. But then again, I added, the recent experiences indicated, that just compiling their ideas and pooling their resources under one umbrella was not enough. The whole is more than the sum of its parts but can not be proclaimed from above. So the problem was then how to combine general political issues with the daily struggles for various interests and alternative development work – so that broad political consciousness and popular movements placing their specific interests within a total perspective are already established when elections come up and will thus be able to generate parties or similar organisations.

*

Even though much of this was recognised by several leading activists in post-election discussions, little has been done to alter the situation. The crucial problem remains. By 1995 it is possible to conclude, that a thus promoted deeper civil society and a more democratic culture are still insufficient for broader and dynamic politics of democratisation.

For instance, very few of the more permanent electoral and politically focused co-ordination bodies³⁷ called for by some activists after the experience of 1992 have been started *and* given priority to in terms of finance and personnel. It is true there were some attempts by progressive NGOs to encourage popular organisations to launch their own candidates and/or support other candidates in return for certain promises in the 1994 *barangay* elections and the 1995 local elections. Such bodies as co-operatives, however, only involves rather small numbers of people and they rarely have a democratically legitimate program for what can and should be done in the village or municipality as a whole. Moreover, the various people's organisations are often associated with different political movements and politicians – at best progressive groups but usually traditional politicians who can offer money and other forms of protection. Hence, the various organisations support different local and national traditional politicians. Some NGOs adjust to this. Others try to stay neutral. Even when popular organisations go for reasonably progressive candidates, moreover, it is difficult for people to keep track of politicians who must also link up with the rich and powerful (at least to get money for campaigning). And there are no democratic parties within which the supporters can elect, scrutinise and recall their representatives.

The problems appearing in 1994 and 1995 were thus similar to those already experienced in the 1992 elections. The usual difficulties even included an inability to induce many of the members of progressive co-operatives to vote according to their basic interests, to resist outright vote buying, and to withstand other forms of

³⁷Not to talk of parties even on the local level.

manipulation.³⁸ These problems cannot, of course, be solved by voter's education. As one experienced NGO activists remarked, "most people know much better than we how the cheating is done." On the contrary, people must run their own ventures in such a way, *and* organise themselves to such an extent, that they are strong enough to refuse to sell their votes before the election and are able to invest them instead, and to draw dividends subsequently in the form of much more valuable policies.

(4) Why have new popular efforts not generated wider politics of democratisation?

So why is it that the new popular and democratic development efforts within civil society have not also generated more widespread and dynamic politics of democratisation? Why not a broader movement, and joint work and organisation – on the basis of common ideas and interests – on behalf of democratic government and the development of society at large?

To begin with, and as already pointed out, the conflicts and disintegration within the Left as a whole have seriously hampered common efforts in this direction.

Moreover, the dialectics of bad experiences from earlier authoritarian and state socialist-oriented forms of political organisation led many, of course, to hope that something will instead emerge from below. There even seems to be more fascination now than a few years ago in the liberal and World Bank sponsored ideas about the deepening of civil society. As already indicated, some of this deepening may well be necessary for more extended politics of democratisation. It is far from sufficient, however, and it can just as well produce fragmentation and politicisation on such basis as ethnicity or patronage – if, that is, no alternative attempts at politicisation are made on the basis of more general popular interests and ideas.

In the basic essay, however, I identified two reasons for why unions or movements working with specific development projects might find it instrumental even so to combine forces and take at least local politics seriously: common structural problems and decentralisation.

*

The first reason was that popular grassroots activists are increasingly confronted with problems which must be dealt with on a general level, such as environmental destruction, aggressive development plans, unemployment, bad housing and the difficulties of running of workers' co-operatives.

Even if nothing observed between 1992 and 1995 speaks against this general prognosis, issues related to basic popular interests have not been in the forefront. It is

³⁸One case in point, analysed in some detail already in the basic study, was the failure of Dante and his team in the local elections in Capas, Tarlac. Actually, as we know by now, this political debacle proved to be the real turning point for the project as a whole. Had the alternative coalition, which aimed at developing a showcase municipality, been able to take over local political power, there had been less resistance to the co-operative and ample opportunities for both reconstruction and new efforts.

true that there has been some joint action in regard to oil prices and environmental problems. But even here there is a tendency towards single issue lobbying and pressure politics. This may produce some immediate results. It is rather easy, however, for the dominant political forces to incorporate such topics. And single issue politics rarely relate to other areas or organisations like unions or co-operatives. Those who continue to be active here may very well be concerned about the environment, for instance. Still the green agenda only solves some of their larger problems. Hence they must relate environmental questions to other issues incorporate them in their daily work (since they have no spare time) and finally agree with friends in other organisations and sectors about how to analyse and handle it all.

As I understand the matter, then, there is a basic lack not of a grand theory, tight ideology and Leninist organisation, but of a common analytical framework and vision of politics and society, as well as of democratically run fora for various organisations and groups, within which activists can situate themselves, analyse the various movements, and consider different problems and issues. These things will not, of course, emerge spontaneously from below. Instead they must grow in a process of politicisation to which time and space and money must be devoted. That is, the participants must study, discuss and try out how the issues can be dealt with jointly instead of separately or even privately.

We must on the other hand note that, firstly, gender issues have not just been more widely acclaimed since 1992. They may also serve as a rallying point – if, that is, problems of gender are viewed as something of concern to both women and men. In that case gender issues relate more directly to how society is and should be governed than do, for instance, development projects based on special interests.

Secondly, a widespread interest might emerge in the need to change the institutions and rules of the game now preventing popular representation and participation based on ideas and interests. This, of course, is not only a question of electoral cheating but also of electoral reform, presidentialism versus parliamentarism, clean government and so on – all of which were never a major preoccupation for the Left as long as armed struggle and lobbying and pressure politics predominated. But maybe it will be now – for those who want to go beyond the old framework and continue the process of democratisation; for those who want to relate to people (especially within the Church) who think real political equality (like human rights) is important as such; for those who remember from 1992 that presidential candidate Miriam Santiago could do well on the much narrower issues of corruption; and for those who now in 1995 have seen how former military coup leader and new senator Gringo Honasan successfully raised the issue of fair access to the political system as a precondition for fair social and economic policies.

The second reason identified in the previous essay why unions or movements working with specific development projects might find it instrumental to combine forces and take at least local politics seriously was decentralisation in accordance with the new local government code. Many resources and powers were about to be allocated to local politicians and bureaucrats. NGOs and people's organisations would need to engage in local politics in order not to lose out to traditional political bosses and businessmen. The law stipulated that some NGOs would be represented in development councils. And grassroots organisations should be better equipped to support and keep track of local political candidates than national ones.

The Philippine Local Government Code is a good example of the decentralisation of state power currently in vogue among students and World Bank development promoters. Part of the initial neo-liberal orientation has been replaced by attempts to "get institutions right". In that case, however, well intended decentralisation is included in the general package for "good governance". And within this framework there is little if any interest in whether and when it is really possible to implement all the good rules and principles in the first place. What structural institutional preconditions are necessary? Which social and political forces must be present? And how do they develop?

Comparatively speaking, the implementation of the local government code is well under way. And in the experience of the NGOs and people's organisations we are following, there is political space for meaningful local intervention by progressive forces. But it is an uphill task. Local political bosses and businessmen are strong. NGOs and people's organisations are weak. Moreover, several of them, like Rotary or hobby associations, are not inclined to work for social and political change. Or they are dependent on traditional politicians, who may also sponsor new NGOs of their own. Meaningful NGO representation, therefore, requires a lot of hard work to promote co-operation among reasonably like-minded organisations, and to bring them and others together to select NGO-candidates instead of leaving this to the established politicians.

In addition, there is still (to my knowledge) little discussion about the kind of corporatist system thus established. Which NGOs should be co-operating with local government and how? What about peoples' organisations? And how should one view sectoral representation as compared to popular representation through general elections? Even if some kind of combination is desirable, then, the experiences from the 1995 elections indicate an apparent risk that the limited number of dynamic NGO activists, overloaded with work as they are, will find it necessary to give priority to the promotion of meaningful NGO representation at the expense of their earlier unavoidably dirty work with disgusting traditional politicians for the purpose of promoting popular representation. This also adds to the factors which so far have

allowed political bosses and their business associates to be the chief beneficiaries of decentralisation.

In other words, the general conclusions in the earlier parts of this essay are vindicated once again: actions and development work contributing to the deepening of civil society and the generation of a democratic culture do not in themselves converge and produce the broader issues and perspectives which may generate extended and dynamic politics of democratisation.

(5) New political formations in the making?

Consequently there is an urgent need now for additional efforts to promote the local politicisation of civil society based on common popular interests and ideas. More and more activists themselves point to this. The problem is how to proceed. Ideally, it should be done by interest-based organisations and movements, which place their special interests within an overall ideological and strategic perspective upheld by a political party. But in the Philippines almost nothing like this is at hand – only a lot of bad experiences from attempts at creating something similar with dogmatic theses plus avant-garde parties and the use of popular organisations as transmission belts. And anyway, the transformation of the socio-economic structure has created new contradictions and new social movements of which account must be taken. Hence the persistent need to start anew, and to build from below.

While a good crop presupposes deep roots, however, these are not sufficient. There must also be weeding and harvesting. Many activists now agree this requires the initiation of political formations on various levels. And they say they have plans to go ahead well before the next full-scale elections in 1988. It is easier said than done, however, to initiate fruitful political formations – given the ideological crisis, financial restraints, lack of time, previous bad experiences, scattered organisations, and individualistic personalities to build upon. And if something significant has not emerged before my 1995 restudy is fully worked out within the framework of the forthcoming comparative book, I am afraid there will be much less room for optimism with regard to popular politics of democratisation than I have hitherto expressed.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Finally, what is specific and what is general, when we compare the experiences from the Philippines, Kerala and Indonesia?

Politics necessary for development

In all the cases, the Left as a whole initially argued in favour of radical political intervention in general, and politically enforced land reform in particular, to overcome the insufficient dynamics of a semi-colonial economy upheld by political monopolies.

However, while the new Maoist Filipinos saw no other option than armed revolutionary struggle, the old Indonesian Left linked up with president Sukarno's nation-state project, and the more reformist Keralites tried a combination of popular pressure and top-down politics of democratisation within the framework of a comparatively open polity and strong civil society.

Successful politics obstruct further advances

On the other hand, these kinds of comparatively successful politics tended over the years to obstruct further advances. In the Philippines, as we know, most leftists argued that imperialists, compradors, and landlords had to be fought head-on before democratic liberties would make sense. In Indonesia, the old leftists even contributed unintentionally to the emergence of the present authoritarian system. In Kerala, centralisation, compartmentalisation, factionalism, vested interests, and locked political conflicts prevented the promotion of post-land reform development.

Rigidity and starting anew vs. pragmatism and trying to renew

However, while the traditional Philippine Left insisted on its old revolutionary track, and lost out as other actors and movements succeeded – despite the absence of radical socio-economic changes – in getting rid of Marcos and paving the way for additional transformation, and the Indonesian communists were even eliminated, the established Kerala Left (which was active within a more open polity and vibrant civil society) showed some capacity for renewal (for pragmatic reasons among others), and was voted back into office.

Accordingly, in the Philippines renewal-oriented leftists had to continue the struggle for alternative development largely on their own, and in Indonesia remaining liberal dissidents and a new generation of radical critics almost have to start from scratch, whereas their counterparts in Kerala found it possible to relate to, try to renew or to influence, and to get support from the old organisations, and from the new Left Front Government as well.

Similar problems and approaches – common interest in democratisation

There were also important similarities, however. The renewal-oriented dissidents often tried to come to grips with associated processes from related points of view; and taken together, this accounts for their contemporary interest in democratisation.

According to the Philippine activists, basic conditions changed as capitalism expanded and reduced the importance of landlordism, increased environmental destruction, and allowed for more liberal forms of government (without, however, generating widespread industrialisation). This in turn gave rise to many new issues and movements, as well as to new possibilities for improving people's position, such as by way of joint development work on the local level (which can be pursued without

necessarily having to gain political power first). While clear-cut class conflicts were not so easy to identify anymore, there was often a common focus on the use and control of a whole range of material resources. And interestingly enough, democratisation was often considered necessary in order to improve people's own capacity to use and control these resources.

Something similar may be said of Kerala, where the popular developmentalists emphasised that the growing importance of commercialism and of diffuse forms of exploitation – in combination with land reform and the improvement of labourers' bargaining power – had paved the way for broad popular development co-operation on the grass roots level through joint and sustainable resource management. Again, this called for further democratisation (in terms of promoting people's ability to make effective use of their rights) for various forms of local popular co-operation, and decentralisation of (and participation in) local government.

In Indonesia, the combination of international pressure, new conflicts and emerging movements in the wake of capitalist expansion (even if politically injected), and the lack of solid institutions to handle this, especially in face of the unavoidable political succession, is slowly creating some space for dissidence and action in the poorly developed civil society as well as in relation to various factions of the elite. Hence, the opposition is moving from attempts at reform and improvements to the benefit of the weak sections of the population within the framework of the New Order, to efforts for political change and especially democratisation as a precondition for further advances.

Different politics of democratisation

The politics of democratisation itself, however, varied.

Most of the Philippine reformists who had to start anew often emphasised a kind of "pure" development activism, and a "deepening" rather than politicisation of civil society. They then tried to add lobbying and pressure politics to this.

The popular developmentalists in Kerala, by contrast, usually found it both possible and tactical to restrict themselves to non-party political development actions in co-operation with the Government, and to refer outright political tasks to the established Left parties and movements.

The Indonesian pro-democracy actors are very weak, disorganised and still lack mass base. While some think there is a possibility to reform the system from within, the majority disagree and argue either that the civil society must first be opened up from above or that it is already possible to develop movements (and, some say, politicise them) under the present conditions.

Similar problems of democratisation

The problems or limits of democratisation, on the other hand, are special under authoritarian rule, as in Indonesia. Here the basic problem is simply the narrow social basis of the pro-democracy actors. Hence, their conflicts, infights and attempts to unite may rather reflect the ideas and vested interests of the activists than the views and conditions among the people. Moreover, the activists vacillate between trying to build anew from below and trying to find various shortcuts such as tactical alliances with sections of the elite, developing "hot" issues which may turn into rallying points or offering a kind of alternative linkages or patronage to genuine grassroots movements among peasants, workers, and urban poor.

When so doing, however, many of the additional difficulties they are confronted with are similar to those in the Philippines and Kerala. The remarkable similarities in all the three cases may then be summarised as follows.

Firstly, in social settings marked by the expansion of blurred capitalist relations there may be a need of but do not seem to be a widespread actual interest among the many dispersed producers in joint democratic control and management to improve their own production. So far no powerful new social movements have come forward.

Secondly, most non-party-political development activities do not make much sense within the logic of the institutional and political-cum-economic interests of, in Indonesia, those who try to reform the system from within or build a new generation of tight radical organisations, or, in the Philippines and Kerala, the public administration and the established leftist movements and parties. (Aside from when, in Kerala, such activities formed part of their top-down development policies when in power.) Many of the activists are therefore isolated and left without such necessary measures as, in Indonesia, co-ordination and joint organisation from below, in Kerala, a consistent democratic decentralisation, and, in the Philippines, a unified democratic and electoral political project.

Thirdly, most of the new activists and reformists themselves do not find it possible to really politicise (by which is not necessarily meant party-politicise) their development actions. Or perhaps they are incapable of, or uninterested in, so doing. The Indonesian activists tend to either concentrate on pure grassroots work or give priority to rapid political change. In the Philippines democratic development work in relation to special issues and interests have opened some room for progressive lobbying and pressure politics within the elitist political system, but have not been possible to place within a general alternative perspective – a political development Project – and transformed into votes. For their part, the popular developmentalists in Kerala (besides first linking up with, and then suffering from the fall of, the leftist government) humbly restricted themselves to creating preconditions for major social and political forces to move forward – which the latter did not do.

Politicisation lagging behind but possibly inevitable

Generally speaking, actions and development work may, thus, contribute to the deepening of civil society and the generation of a democratic culture but do not in themselves converge and produce the broader issues and perspectives which may generate extended and dynamic politics of democratisation.

These problems do not necessarily imply, however, that the dynamic association between new popular development efforts and democratisation has come to a standstill. Many of the actors themselves are aware of the problems. Moreover, for instance, the likely wider space for various Indonesian movements and organisations in the process of further expansion of capitalism and political succession will probably nourish politicisation. And the loss of momentum in Kerala and the Philippines is currently followed by at least some further decentralisation of government and authority which, although contradictory and carried out for other purposes than those of the progressive forces, may serve to widen the space for local popular development movements.

However, what will actually emerge from these and other tendencies remains, of course, to first be examined in further re-studies and then to be compared within the framework of the broader discussion on popular movement and organisation in development and democratisation.