The successful implementation of distributive policies depends on the nature of the political interaction between the pro-reform forces in state and society. If their actions are mutually reinforcing, then the reform effort internalizes social conflict within the state. This reciprocal interaction between state and social actors can lead to unexpected political outcomes (Jonathan Fox, 1993: 40).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The kinds of CARP land redistribution outcomes, their extent, and their geographic distribution are largely reflective of the nature, extent, and geographic spread of the pro-reform state-society coalitions pushing for redistributive land reform. This chapter analyzes state-society interactions for redistributive land reform. Its aim is to better understand the role played by state and societal actors in shaping and reshaping the CARP process, resulting in the kinds of outcomes explained in the preceding chapters. The case studies in chapter 4 showed how state and non-state actors surmounted obstacles, overcame limits, and harnessed opportunities, resulting in redistributive land reform. The case studies in chapter 3 showed how these actors failed in their attempts to carry out land redistribution. The nationally aggregated data on land redistribution in chapter 2 showed that partial but substantial redistribution outcomes have been achieved, although critical treatment of the official data is necessary.

This chapter is devoted to a more systematic analysis of the various pro-reform state and non-state actors, focusing on their political strategies and forms of collective action and on how dynamic state-society political
interactions resulted in uneven outcomes in redistributive land reform, spatially and temporally. Moreover, this chapter focuses its analysis at the national level to provide a broader perspective on the earlier discussion of state–society interactions in the local case studies.

This chapter has six sections. Following section 5.1, the introduction, section 5.2 analyzes the peasant movements and their allies (collectively and loosely referred to here as “rural social movement organizations”) and their struggle for land. Continuity and change in their agendas, repertoire of collective actions, degree of organizational and political influence, political strategies, network of allies, and geographic spread over time are examined in an attempt to explain what causes these changes and what impact these changes have on the implementation of redistributive land reform policy. How reformist autonomous peasant groups emerged that explore the reform opportunities offered within the CARP legal framework is also examined. Section 5.3 traces the general contour of the emergence of pro–land reform state actors within the DAR during a specific period. Building on the assumption that pro-reform state actors do matter in policy implementation, this section examines the causes of their emergence and their impact on implementation processes and outcomes of redistributive land reform. These first two sections thus show the distinct roles that rural social movements “from below” and pro-reform state actors “from above” each play in the push for redistributive land reform, including the strengths and weaknesses of each set of actors. Section 5.4 examines the evolution of pro-reform state–society alliances and interactions for land reform and the role they have played in CARP implementation. It explains how and why such alliances and interactions emerged over time and with what impact on land reform implementation. Section 5.5 analyzes clashes between pro- and anti-reform state–society coalitions over the issue of redistributive land reform, and the outcomes of these conflicts. This section demonstrates the strengths and limitations of the pro-reform state–society coalition in pushing for redistributive land reform, which partly accounts for the policy’s highly uneven and varied implementation processes and outcomes. Section 5.6 analyzes the sub-national spatial variations in land reform outcomes and demonstrates that it is the state–society interaction that largely determines patterns of variations. Section 5.7 offers a short conclusion.

5.2 AUTONOMOUS RURAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS “FROM BELOW”

As explained in the theoretical section of this study, the most promising type of peasant movements in the context of pushing for redistributive land reform
are those that have a high degree of both *autonomy* and *capacity*, the twin foundations of peasant organizational power. This section maps and examines the different types of peasant associations that have emerged in the Philippines since the early 1970s. Important national peasant movements and organizations are also presented and examined, with emphasis on their aims and agendas, repertoire of collective actions, and political strategies. Significant attention will be given to the types of allies these peasant groups have and their degree of autonomy from those allies. Moreover, this section analyzes continuity and change in the different peasant groups’ land reform agendas and their political strategies in pursuit of these agendas. Specifically, it explains why most of the peasant groups that originally rejected CARP and stayed away from its early implementation would, some years later, change their attitude and eventually interact with the state to push for the implementation of the same land reform program they had earlier rejected.

Cycles of peasant collective actions for various types of rural reforms, small-scale and large-scale, armed and unarmed, have been a remarkable characteristic of the Philippine history from the Spanish colonial era to today.¹ Almost always, allies have played important roles in these peasant actions. During the first three quarters of the past century, peasant allies were usually political movements or parties (usually communist or socialist parties),² influential middle-class professionals, and some progressive church leaders (as in the case of the Federation of Free Farmers, or FFF).³ These allies have been largely responsible for forging horizontal linkages among local peasant groups, stretching the political reach of peasant collective actions, and systematizing, even modifying, peasant demands addressed to the state. As state-building took more coherent form, peasant demands began to be centralized before the state, and peasant actions tended to veer away from direct confrontation with landlords.”⁴

The mass political agitation in the 1960s, part of and influenced by the global and national political upheavals of that decade, included the call for land reform. Urban-based left wing political activists were able to penetrate the mainstream, conservative FFF and recruited peasant leaders and supporters into radical politics. Militant forms of collective action were launched. One of the victories with strategic importance during this period of mobilizations was the creation of the DAR. In 1972, however, martial law was imposed. The conservative leadership of the FFF quickly moved to support Marcos. There was no room left for legal, above-ground political opposition, thereby forcing the radical activists to go underground and join the communist-led
clandestine movement. Most of these peasant leaders and political activists would later resurface above ground through varying and more sophisticated organizational forms.

The beginning of the last quarter of the past century witnessed major development of the rural social movement front: rural reform-oriented NGOs were being set up primarily by the Catholic and Protestant churches (see Franco, 1994, 2001b). This development would strategically alter the political-organizational terrain for, and character of, rural social movements in the country. Meanwhile, other traditional allies of the peasantry remained entrenched, whether in conservative or radical political communities. Many of them had allied with the dictatorship and provided the latter with the needed semblance of peasant support, while others had joined the progressive social movements. The communist-led ND movement would become the most influential among the rural social movement organizations from the 1960s through the 1980s, ideologically, organizationally, and politically. It would largely be credited for the sustained demand and political agitation for land reform.

From the early 1970s until the late 1980s, the country’s rural polity was marked by the rapid growth of the communist insurgency led by the Maoist CPP and its armed wing, the NPA. This CPP-led movement became known as the National-Democratic movement, or “Nat-Dem” or “ND,” because of its program of a two-stage revolution (i.e., first to achieve “national democracy” by overthrowing imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism; then moving on to the second stage, the socialist revolution). The principal form of struggle was armed, patterned after the Maoist dictum of “wave by wave, surround the cities from the countryside” within the politico-military strategy of a “protracted people’s war.” The ND movement subordinated all other forms of struggle (e.g., legal and electoral) to the principal armed form. It identified the “proletariat” as the “leading force” and the peasantry as the “main force” (Guerrero, 1970, but see Putzel, 1995; Caouette, 2004). The subsequent ideological, political, and organizational makeup of the legal ND peasant movements and organizations was influenced by this orientation. Two aspects of this orientation have to be reiterated. First, it held that “genuine agrarian reform” could be achieved only after the victory of the revolution. Yet second, while the revolution was being waged, partial and selective implementation of revolutionary agrarian reform could be carried out. Included in the “minimum” program was the NPA’s tersyang baliktad campaign, the terms of which are similar to CARP’s leasehold. Tersyo literally means “a third,” referring to the usual share of the peasants in 67-33 (or more
commonly 70-30) share tenancy arrangements. Inverting (baliklad) in favour of the peasants was a powerful rallying campaign that involved tens of thousands of peasants across the country in the 1970s and 1980s.

This orientation partly accounted for the phenomenal growth of the ND movement in the 1970s and 1980s under the authoritarian regime (Franco, 1994; Rutten, 1996). But that same ideological and political framing became the source of the movement’s weakening after the late 1980s, amidst significant political-economic changes in the global, national, and local setting. The intensification of internal conflicts within the CPP leadership — which occurred amidst the movement’s political isolation during and after the people’s uprising in February 1986 that overthrew the Marcos government — led many of the movement’s key leaders to question the basic “protracted people’s war” strategy of the revolution. This debate led to in-fighting; and the in-fighting led to the movement’s split in 1993.

The KMP was formally launched in July 1985 and immediately became the main open, legal national peasant movement opposed to the authoritarian regime. The KMP’s biggest contribution during the remaining months of the Marcos regime was to publicly expose the failure of the land reform program, the deteriorating economic condition of the peasants, and the widespread violations of human rights in the countryside. The KMP remained the most vocal and active peasant organization even during the early years of the Aquino administration. It was able to play a significant role in the subsequent policy debate about agrarian reform. It also led a march of some 20,000 peasants to Malacañang Palace on 22 January 1987 to press for land reform, in which the protesters were fired upon by the police and military forces, killing thirteen and wounding dozens more. This bloody incident forced the Aquino administration to address the demand for land reform.

During the subsequent legislative debate about land reform, however, the KMP was no longer the only organization publicly projected and popularly recognized. Other progressive peasant organizations developed, such as the highly differentiated social-democratic group, during the political opening in 1986. This social-democratic bloc pushed for the formation of a broad national coalition of peasant organizations: The Congress for a People’s Agrarian Reform (CPAR) launched in mid-1987. The KMP and other ND rural people’s organizations joined the coalition. They did so with reservations, principally rooted in their ideological differences with the politically moderate social democrats. The CPAR was at the forefront of the peasants’ lobby for a more progressive land reform policy, often receiving more publicity than the KMP. The KMP never believed that a meaningful land reform policy could be enacted.
by a national legislative body overwhelmingly dominated by big landlords. And its scepticism was not without basis. Thus the stress of the KMP was to “expose and oppose” the anti-land reform character of the Aquino regime and at the same time put forward a radical version of land reform as an alternative. The KMP intensified its national campaign for widespread peasant occupation of idle and abandoned land and Marcos crony-owned land, more in order to project the land reform issue politically than to actually secure ownership and control of land to address the peasants’ pressing needs.

When CARP was made law in June 1988, it was rejected by almost all peasant organizations across the political spectrum. This rejection was based on the key issues of reform coverage and landlord compensation, which the peasant groups thought were too far from their radical proposals. The CPAR formulated its alternative policy proposal of land reform called 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. However, this campaign did not succeed (see Putzel, 1998).

The KMP rejected CARP, criticizing the policy as “pro-landlord” and “anti-peasant” (KMP, 2000, 1993). Effectively ignoring the CPAR signature campaign, the KMP intensified its land occupation campaign, with the goal of polarizing the political situation and thus putting the ND radical form of struggle, which was then beginning to lose vigour, back on the agenda as the most viable option for meaningful societal transformation. In some cases, the KMP conducted its land occupations with the participation of the NPA. In other cases, the areas that were projected as KMP-occupied lands were the same communities that had in fact earlier been subjected to the ND “agrarian revolution” program. In still other cases, peasants occupied land and later sought assistance from the KMP (see Putzel, 1995; Kerkvliet, 1993; KMP, 1992a). Overall, and by the late 1980s, the KMP claimed to have occupied 75,000 hectares of land, benefitting 50,000 peasant households. However, most of these land occupations were not sustained.

In an assessment made by the KMP in early 1992, the organization’s secretary general, who was from Negros Island in the Visayas where the KMP reported to have occupied 45,000 hectares, admitted two crucial points about land occupation: First, most of the invaded lands were later recovered by the landlords with the aid of private armies and the military. Second, but related, those lands that were maintained under the control of the organization had not been made productive. Specifically, he pointed out that not more than 10 percent of the total occupied lands had been made productive (KMP, 1992a).
Within the KMP, several reasons for such failure were identified. First, most of the areas were heavily militarized and so the peasants could not resume their normal farming activities. Second, almost no government or private institution wanted to give credit to the peasants occupying the lands. Third, the pool of cadres, peasants or otherwise, assigned in their communities were trained as political activists and not as development activists who could help these communities organize profitable farming enterprises. This was especially difficult because, and this is the fourth reason, most of the occupied lands were marginal. Fifth, and perhaps reflecting all these factors, when the communities started to be militarized, the peasants seldom made exhaustive efforts to stay, perhaps because they felt there was not much at stake in the land: neither legal title nor productive activities (KMP, 1992a).

In short, the KMP’s land occupation campaign during the second half of the 1980s contributed to keeping the issue of land reform on the national agenda, but it failed as an alternative land reform program that could be implemented outside of the state. And internally for the ND movement, the campaign failed to create the political polarization that would be necessary to put the revolutionary movement back on track.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary land reform program being carried out selectively in some areas where the NPA was strong suffered a fate similar to the KMP’s land occupations. The communist insurgents’ campaigns for land rent reduction, the abolition of usury, and selective land confiscation made initial and partial gains for the peasants, as some lands were redistributed to landless peasants while land rents and loan interests were reduced in areas where the NPA was strong. But as soon as the general politico-military condition began to be unfavourable to the communist rebels in the late 1980s, most of these partial gains were rolled back, as landlords violently took back their land or resumed the onerous sharing arrangements. The campaign to eradicate usury proved to be contentious even within the revolutionary movement, because in many cases where this campaign was launched, local moneylenders simply withdrew from their activities, draining the community of the much-needed cash to finance rural village production. In the end, many peasants, even in the guerrilla zones, contracted loans from these moneylenders anyway but concealed them from the guerrillas (see Putzel, 1995). Even the tersyung baliktad campaign was not sustained (see Franco, 2001b).

The same ideological, political, and organizational factors that accounted for the KMP’s strength during its early years, especially under an authoritarian regime, led to its weakening toward the 1990s. The ND movement’s analysis of Philippine society as static, semi-feudal, and semi-colonial locked the KMP
into a situation of inflexibility amidst a profoundly and rapidly changing context. The “statist” and thus “maximalist” (i.e., “all or nothing”) attitude of the ND movement with regard to the question of state power imprisoned the ND rural movements in a situation where these were unable to take full advantage of political opportunities opened on the agrarian front.

At the height of the KMP’s popularity in 1985–1992, its political influence was, to varying degrees, significantly felt in most regions of the country. However, between and within these regions, its influence was highly varied and uneven. Organizationally, the KMP’s mass base was amorphous, relying mainly on the mass of supporters and sympathizers of the ND movement in general; it was unclear even to the KMP leaders who their members were and who actually “called the shots,” so to speak, as to when and how to carry out political mobilizations. After 1985, the KMP claimed to have a membership of 800,000 individual peasants. Internally, however, KMP leaders knew this was a deliberately bloated claim for propaganda purposes. The question of who the movement’s supporters, followers, and members were was a perennial issue of internal debate with the KMP, at least between 1985 and 1993. In a major internal assessment by the KMP’s National Council in early 1992, an “honest accounting” was made of membership and mobilization performance. A few citations from these records are revealing. In Central Luzon, the KMP’s chapter AMGL (Alyansa ng Magsasaka sa Gitnang Luson, Alliance of Central Luzon Farmers) had publicly claimed 35,000 members; its leader admitted that by 1991 AMGL had only 3,706 members and could barely mobilize 3,000 peasants in any protest action (KMP, 1992a: 20). In Southern Tagalog, the regional chapter KASAMA-TK (Katipunan ng mga Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan, Council of Peasant Organizations in Southern Tagalog) had publicly claimed 100,000 members; its leader, however, admitted that by 1991 it had in fact only 1,962 members (KMP, 1992a: 24).

Publicly, when confronted with the contentious issue of exact membership numbers, the KMP would argue that it was a “movement” rather than a formal organization and so it was difficult to do head-counting of members. Internally, it explained that the most crucial indicator of the number of “members” was the number of peasants that the KMP could mobilize. The KMP called this its “mobilizable base.” Even using this argument, however, it appears that the KMP’s base had shrunk by the late 1980s. An interesting case in this regard is that of the KMP-Visayas, where there was a sharp decline in the number of people mobilized from 1985 onward. Table 5.1 shows the number of people mobilized by the KMP in the different provinces in the Visayas during the two most important protest months (i.e., October, which marked Marcos’ “fake
Table 5.1
The KMP-Visayas number of participants in mass mobilizations (1985–1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of KMP mobilization</th>
<th>Number of peasant participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1985</td>
<td>42,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1986</td>
<td>53,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1987</td>
<td>29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1988</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1989</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1990</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1991</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Until 1988, the KMP launched major mobilizations in October to protest against the “fake” land reform program of Marcos, which was started in October 1972. Beginning in 1989, June became the KMP’s protest month against the “new fake land reform” (i.e., CARP).


land reform,” and June, which marked the “fake CARP”). The data shows that the peak years of the KMP-Visayas were 1985–1987. Beginning in 1988, a sharp decline occurred in the number of participants in mobilizations. During the 1990s and beyond, the size of the KMP’s actions would not come near those seen in 1985–1987. The same trend of sharp reductions in the size and frequency of mass mobilizations of the KMP occurred in the rest of the country during the same period (KMP, 1992a). It even got worse for KMP in the 1990s. The fall of the Marcos dictatorship in early 1986 and the massive military assault against the ND base areas in the countryside beginning in 1987 were among the most important reasons for the declining peasant participation in the KMP mobilizations. But other reasons were equally important, and these will be discussed later.

Nevertheless, and more significantly, the KMP was able to project itself publicly and politically as the most important militant peasant movement in the country during the 1980s and beyond. It had, arguably, a near hegemony in the policy and political debates about land reform in the country. The broad ND movement mobilized its supporters within the mainstream media to project the KMP as “the” largest and “only” genuine peasant movement in the Philippines — the rest were portrayed as either insignificant or “fake.” The
KMP invested resources and deployed cadres to carry out media-related and political networking activities, nationally and internationally. This worked for some time in the 1980s and 1990s, nationally and even internationally.

Meanwhile, between 1987 and 1989, the Aquino administration launched its “total war” policy against the communist insurgents. Most of the victims of the military’s indiscriminate bombings and arrests were peasants and peasant leaders broadly associated with the ND rural social movement. At the local level, the KMP-affiliated organizations almost completely disappeared, trying to evade harassment from the Aquino’s military. Participation in the KMP’s mobilizations dwindled dramatically, but it was not only due to fear of military reprisal. Most KMP leaders also reported that ordinary peasants persistently complained about purely political “agit-prop” (agitation-propaganda) campaigns without any concrete, especially immediate, socioeconomic objectives and gains: “Pudpod na ang tsinelas namin sa kama-martsa, pag-uwi namin sa bahay, wala pa ring mai-saing” [Our slippers were already worn out amidst so many marches that we attended, but when we come back to our homes, we still had nothing to cook]. This became a popularly articulated sentiment among the ND-influenced peasant communities, and slowly it trickled into the sympathetic consciousness of the corps of cadres within the KMP and its NGO allies.

By the late 1980s, when it was clear that the mass base of the ND movement had been seriously affected by the government’s counterinsurgency operations, the general call within the movement was to recover the lost mass base. In response, the NPS (the group tasked with spearheading the “open peasant mass movement”) of the CPP Central Committee revised much of the orthodoxy in the strategy and tactics of the CPP. Relative to other CPP organs, the NPS came up with one of the earlier critiques of the CPP analyses and strategy with regard to the rural mass movement’s role in the revolution. Among other key issues, the NPS called for reinvigorated organizing work in the more populous lowland areas (the CPP’s stress had been upland, mainly for guerrilla base-building) through “inclusive,” “fast-track,” and “issue-based” organizing methods aimed at achieving palpable gains for the peasants. The organizing method was “inclusive” in that it included strata of the peasantry that had marketable farm surpluses (poor and middle-income peasants and not just the landless rural (semi)proletariat). This is partly in recognition of the preponderance of legitimate small and medium-sized farm holdings in the country, especially in the rice, corn, and coconut sectors (recall the data presented in chapter 2). The imperative for cross-class and multisectoral alliances — for example peasant-worker alliances, rural-urban alliances —
became even more important amidst the onslaught of neoliberal agricultural policies of deregulation, privatization, and import liberalization. The approach was “fast-track” as opposed to the guerrilla zone preparatory-work method of slow accumulation of core cadres through “step-by-step,” “solid” organizing work. This also meant veering away from the concept of an “amorphous” mass of supporters (as exemplified by the traditional movement framing of membership — that is, “all those who would not divulge our presence to the military and despotic landlords are our members”) and toward specifically defined movement followers and organizational membership.

The new method was issue-based as opposed to the movement’s previous approach of broad and quite vague “motherhood” (general policy) issues like “buwagin ang pyudalismo!” (dismantle feudalism!). The approach aimed for immediate, palpable socioeconomic gains while still maintaining strategic perspective. The implications of the adjustment were three: First, clandestine or illegal organizers could not play a key role within this type of movement; open and legal organizers were the most appropriate. Second, legal peasant organizations and their leaderships had to have a greater role in the broader rural social movement. Third, these organizations had to directly engage the state in their struggles if they were after tangible gains on issues such as land, irrigation, price subsidies, and infrastructure.18

From late 1989 until 1993, the new approach proved effective in recovering lost mass base areas, organizing new communities, and securing concrete socioeconomic gains for the peasants. By 1992, different non-KMP, ND-influenced peasant organizations were formed along crop sector lines, such as the rice and corn peasants’ national coalition and the BUTIL, which engaged in massive rice and corn dumping (tambak-palay or tambak-butil) in front of the government National Food Authority (NFA) offices to press for higher prices for palay (unhusked rice) and to protest against the NFA’s privatization and import liberalization policies. Another organization was the KAMMPIL (Kalipunan ng Maliliit na Magniniyog sa Pilipinas, Federation of Small Coconut Farmers and Farmworkers’ Organizations), which started to engage the government on the issue of recovering the billions of pesos from the coconut levy fund collected during the Marcos era, which was widely believed to have somehow ended up under the private control of Marcos cronies like Danding Cojuangco. Separate renewed organizing work among plantation workers in Mindanao in the context of the land reform struggle was also spearheaded by the NPS. At this point, tactical struggles for land using the positive provisions of CARP could be carried out only sporadically, since the DAR bureaucracy did not want to work with progressive peasant organizations.
Meanwhile, many national and local NGOs under varying degrees of influence of the NPS worked according to this adjusted concept of political and organizational tasks. At the height of the CPP influence, many of the well-known NGOs supporting the peasant movement had been brought firmly into the fold of the ND movement. In fact, many of the decisions on the direction and conduct of the peasant movement had been carried out through these NGOs, which were heavily influenced by party intellectuals. But these same NGO-based party intellectuals, who were directly exposed to open, legal peasant struggles, were the first ones to be critical of the “instrumentalist” attitude of the ND toward peasant organizations and NGOs (i.e., using these organizations for the strengthening and solidifying of the ND’s power and influence rather than genuinely seeking to help achieve the peasants’ goals). It was not surprising that they were the most active cadres in the internal reorientation drive within the ND movement. At the forefront was the PEACE Foundation.

The PEACE Foundation was founded in 1977 by several progressive bishops from the Protestant and Catholic churches. It became one of the biggest and most important NGOs influenced by the ND movement. Many of the PEACE community organizers in the 1970s and 1980s were directly responsible for carrying out organizing work in the rural areas. The organizing method then, however, was framed within the “guerrilla zone preparation” (internally referred to as “GZPrep”) purpose. The PEACE Foundation network was crucial in the subsequent formation of major ND rural organizations such as the KMP. The reform-oriented NPS cadres were quite entrenched within the PEACE network from the 1970s to 1992. Thus, the revisionist and reformist tendencies of the NPS were experimented with first through this NGO’s vast national network. Nevertheless, other ND-oriented NGOs were more or less convinced of the need to carry out some reorientation of the NPS strategy. In fact, the KMP itself, or at least its national leaders, became convinced by the unconventional approaches being experimented with by the NPS. The reorientation in strategy led by the NPS between 1988 and 1992 gained most ground in the regions of Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Central Philippines, and the plantation belt of Davao-Cotabato in Mindanao, although within these regions the degree of their organizational and political influence was highly varied and uneven. Due to the strategic political value of regions 3 and 4 (Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog, respectively) to national political-propaganda campaigns, being regions that are geographically adjacent to the national capital, the NPS reorientation campaign gave priority to these two regions.
The CPP, however, was unconvinced by the “revisionist” and “reformist” orientation of the “new” strategy of the NPS. In a 1989 political bureau decision, the CPP leadership rejected the NPS strategy (then labelled the “September Thesis”) and ordered the cadres in the legal peasant mass movement to go back to the original framework of peasant organizing work, that is, “GZPrep” (Franco, 2001b). The CPP Central Committee even rejected the land occupation campaign because it was “making the armed struggle serve the mass movement” (Weekley, 2001: 203, 215).

By early 1992, the KMP geared up to institutionalize the new orientation. It produced a blueprint on how to carry out the new strategy in organizing work and political mobilization that included engaging the state on the land issue via CARP. In early 1992, the KMP (1992b: 2) admitted thus:

Central among the weaknesses identified was KMP’s inability to readily adjust to the post-EDSA [1986] situation during which KMP focused on mere political advocacy of fundamental social alternatives instead of shifting its stress on struggle for reforms and economic concessions. This shift was needed then to sustain KMP’s grounding on the larger mass of peasants whose level of politicization have not been raised beyond pure anti-Marcos slogans. They became the most vulnerable victims of anti-communist propaganda. However, they are also the same mass of peasants who suffer the worst economic hardships but whose immediate interest for reforms and economic concessions were not promptly addressed by KMP.

Furthermore,

The ambiguity in the Aquino government’s Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law or CARL has accorded chances for big landowners to evade land reform. But while so, it has also given KMP’s chapters tactical opportunities to use the law in defending their right for the land. They have learned to combine the legal and metalegal forms of struggle to strengthen and legitimize their position vis-à-vis the big landowning class (KMP, 1992b: 26).

However, by the end of 1992, a serious split had occurred within the CPP that had far-reaching effects in all ND organizations, both open/legal and clandestine/illegal, so that the initial momentum of the KMP reorientation had to be substantially realized later and outside the ND organizational framework. In 1993, all the organizations of the ND movement and the legal organizations under their influence, such as the KMP, split over differences on ideological
and political strategies. There were three major splinter groups, at least initially: One group reaffirmed the basic principles of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist line under the leadership of Armando Liwanag (pseudonym).\(^2\) Another major bloc was led by (the late) Popoy Lagman, who was able to win over the majority of the CPP support base in Metro Manila. Subsequently, this group adopted a “workerist-Leninist” ideological framework. The last major group came to be known as the “third bloc,” also known at that time as the “democratic bloc.” This was a highly heterogeneous group composed of various smaller groups that had opted to undergo a process of rethinking and renewal without fixing any ideological or political line immediately after the split. This group would later split into smaller groups, though both the first and second blocs would also be plagued by internal divisions. It is to be noted that among these splinter groups, only one would later pursue a “non-party, social movement” orientation — that is, Padayon (the Visayan word for “continue”), which counts as its principal support base much of the former CPP-NPS’s peasant mass base and many of its former cadres (Padayon later joined other political blocs for the establishment of the party-list group Akbayan). Yet, still many other former ND cadres opted to completely detach from both the party- and social movement-oriented groups, and concentrated their work within the (narrow) parameters of specific projects of their NGOs. Further realignments occurred during the next ten years, but none of the groups would be able to regain the level of organizational and political influence enjoyed by the unified ND movement in the mid-1980s, although the Maoist CPP and its allied organizations would be able to consolidate their forces toward the end of the 1990s onward (see Caouette, 2004).\(^2\) In mid-2005, all the former ND groups, plus a number of other non-ND radical socialist groups such as BISIG (Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalismo sa Isip at Gawa or Unity for the Advancement of Socialism in Theory and Practice) and Pandayan, forged a historic coalition with possible strategic orientation. The coalition is called Laban ng Masa or “Struggle of the Masses.” Whether this alliance can be sustained remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, going back to the early 1990s ND peasant movement, some key national leaders opted to dissociate themselves from the KMP and the tarnished name of the organization, and instead formed the Demokratikong Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (DKMP, Democratic Peasant Movement of the Philippines).\(^2\) On the one hand, the KMP retained control of a sizeable portion of the original, but largely constricted (i.e., with a reduced number of supporters), mass base of the organization, mostly in upland interior areas. On the other hand, the DKMP, while taking a modest share of the original support
base with it, was composed more of local peasant groups that emerged during the reorientation period after the late 1980s. The DKMP vowed to pursue the militant tradition of the KMP but to further develop the aborted ideological, political and organizational reorientation. Liberated from the ND dogmatism, the DKMP loosely identified itself with the “third bloc,” as well as with the PEACE Foundation, which had been able to break free from the CPP influence, although not without major organizational setbacks.

The first major resolution by the PEACE-DKMP alliance was to engage the government on the issue of land reform, using CARP as a starting point. This opening of the DKMP was partly internally driven (the desire to continue the reorientation to reposition itself politically) and partly externally driven, as political opportunities opened up. At this point, the new DAR leadership was demonstrating its reformist tendencies, and some of the earlier identified “positive provisions” within the CARP law were showing some concrete promise of delivering actual land reform gains to peasants. Organizationally and politically, the DKMP’s influence during its first few years was significantly felt in areas where PEACE had made earlier inroads in organizing work, notably in Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Central Philippines, and the Davao-Cotabato plantation belt in Mindanao. But again, progress was highly varied and uneven upon a closer examination from the regional to the municipal level.

Meanwhile, the dynamic changes in the political opportunity structure for rural mobilizations and land claim-making, as well as the far-reaching realignment of forces within the political left and civil society groups, have also partly influenced and have been influenced by the changes in the priorities in funding commitment by northern development agencies. In the 1970s to 1980s, the national-democratic civil society groups had enjoyed the generous support of European and North American funding agencies. However, toward the late 1980s, the moderate social democrats began to erode the ND share of foreign funding, when the former started to get substantial funds from Catholic agencies such as the German Misereor, the Dutch Cebemo (which later would be reorganized as Cordaid), and the Ford Foundation. Other significant European funding agencies such as the German Bread for the World and the Dutch Inter-Church Organization for Development and Cooperation (ICCO) continued their support for the ND rural-oriented groups; however, the 1992–1993 split in the ND movement spelled the end of most of the funding support to these organizations. Thus, in terms of foreign funding support, the 1990s witnessed generous funding to the moderate social democrats, while the NDs and the ex-NDs became marginalized. The PEACE Foundation for example had no significant external funding beginning in 1993. But toward the late
1990s, the social democrats eventually lost most of this foreign funding, partly due to their inability to deliver their promised output. For example, these groups had marginal output in terms of successful land redistribution in their land reform campaigns — compared to some ex-NDs that persevered in their work despite marginal funding and in the end were able to demonstrate far more land reform successes. By the late 1990s, there was no significant external funding for land reform campaigns for any rural social movement organizations. It was not until 2001 that the Dutch ICCO started to entertain funding land reform campaigns again, starting with the PEACE Foundation. This support would later broaden and expand.

In short, the ND split and the subsequent erosion of ND hegemony in rural social movements coincided with other political changes on the rural front that, taken together, had a profound and far-reaching impact on the political dynamics within rural social movements and between them and the state. The CARP process would be an important context and object of these state–society political dynamics. These political actors and the CARP institutional processes and outcomes would shape and reshape each other over time.

The post-1992 period was marked by the proliferation of autonomous rural social movement organizations — partly due to the widespread realignments of different left and centre-left political organizations. The degree of influence of these peasant organizations would partly cause the highly uneven and varied, but relatively positive, outcomes in CARP implementation from 1992 onward. It is thus important to analyze these kinds of movements in detail.

After Ramos’ election in mid-1992, CPAR was disbanded, mainly because about half of the member organizations had opted to support Ramos’ presidential bid, even though he campaigned for a 50-hectare retention limit for land (Franco, 1999a).27 (The law states that a landlord can retain only 5 hectares of land. This legal limit has several “loopholes” through which a landlord can effectively increase his/her retained area; see Putzel, 1992. Increasing the retention limit to 50 hectares, however, would automatically exclude majority of the farmlands in the country from land reform.) The demise of CPAR and the ND split in turn created an opportunity for realignments within the broad left and centre-left peasant movements and the NGO community. A coalition of NGOs and peasant organizations was formed, the Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS), which brought together several former ND organizations (e.g., DKMP and the PEACE Foundation), including the “popular democrats”28 and the independent socialist group BISIG,29 plus other autonomous groups. In addition, various associations across the political spectrum began to cooperate around advocacy for some policy issues despite the absence of formal organizational coalitions.
Moreover, during this period other non-ND progressive peasant organizations became stronger and more widespread — the PAKISAMA (Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka, National Movement of Farmers’ Associations), for instance, which identified with the broad social-democratic political group. The PAKISAMA teamed up with a huge and then well-funded national network of rural-oriented NGOs: PhilDHRRA (Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas). The break-up of CPAR also freed this network from its obligation to toe the CPAR campaign line of complete and perpetual opposition to CARP. Immediately after the breakup of CPAR, the network started to engage the new DAR leadership headed by Ernesto Garilao, himself being identified with the broad social-democratic community, on the land reform issue (see Liamzon, 1996).

Generously funded by European Catholic development agencies and by the Ford Foundation, the social-democratic rural social movement organizations had their most widespread presence nationwide and conducted their most consistent and sustained political campaign for land reform in the mid-1990s. During that period, they formed a national coalition called Agrarian Reform Now!, or AR Now!. This group was well funded and run by a committed, talented, and articulate corps of urban-based activists. This network became organizationally and politically influential in Southern Luzon, parts of Central Mindanao, and parts of southern and northern Philippines, but the degree of its organizational and political influence at the provincial level in these regions was, again, varied and uneven. The sustained national and international campaign for the local Mapalad agrarian case (Bukidnon) had been a crucial rallying point for the coalition (see Quitoriano, 2000). By 2000, however, the network started to experience funding problems, when the Ford Foundation, Cordaid, and Misereor radically reduced support or in some cases totally stopped support. This sudden reduction in funding would significantly affect its capacity to continue organizing work among peasants for land reform and to sustain national-level advocacy. In early 2003, personality differences between the PAKISAMA national leaders created further paralysis and setbacks for the network. A member organization of AR Now!, Task Force Mapalad (TFM), would continue much of the network’s work, but on a limited scale and mainly in the province of Negros Occidental. TFM, formerly funded by the Canadian CIDA and later by the Dutch ICCO, is an unusual organization (by Philippine standards): It is a hybrid NGO-peasant organization entity — having mass support from among poor peasants but with leadership roles taken by city-based professionals. By 2006, enjoying generous funding support from ICCO,
among others, TFM was seeking to expand its work in areas outside Negros Occidental.

By 2000, further reconfigurations occurred in the peasant movements and the ranks of their allies directly engaged in the land reform struggle; these were partly internally driven (by ideological and institutional turf conflicts and even personality differences) and partly externally influenced (by realignments of state actors to different sections of the broad rural social movements).

By this time, the DKMP had been seriously weakened due to numerous internal defections of its member organizations, in part caused by personality differences. Moreover, DKMP’s leader, Jaime Tadeo, was appointed by former president Joseph Estrada to the board of directors of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP). This appointment prevented Tadeo from being a vocal critic of the government’s agrarian policies. But the majority of cadres who bolted from the ND movement in 1992–1993 had long planned to develop a different breed of rural social movement, at least in the context of the Philippines during that time. Unlike most other groups and individuals who left the Maoist movement, the groups associated with the peasant sector did not opt to establish communist parties. They were deeply interested in a non-party social movement framework, of which the key concepts of “autonomy,” “internal democracy,” “leadership-membership accountability,” “poly-centric leadership,” among others, are critical building blocks.33

Their serious aspirations to establish this type of movement, added to the realization that DKMP’s organizational structure, political orientation and entrenched leadership did not match what they wanted to do, prompted these groups and newly emerging local peasant leaders to pursue their social movement renewal outside DKMP. By the second half of the 1990s, most DKMP member organizations had slowly drifted away from their national federation. They would later gravitate towards each other in a loose political community. And this initiative would lead to the official formation of UNORKA.

The formal birth of UNORKA in 2000, and its teaming up with the PEACE Foundation network, provided a boost in the national land reform campaign. This was further boosted when the Dutch agency ICCO decided to once again support land reform campaigns and offered support to PEACE and to UNORKA. UNORKA fast became a robust new type of peasant movement. It is a highly polycentric rural social movement, or political network, with its local member groups themselves being centres of power. Moreover, it is very much land reform focused. By 2001, UNORKA had become directly engaged in the struggle for land redistribution of some 200,000 hectares and in 500 legal disputes involving at least 90,000 landless rural poor households (or around half million people), an unprecedented scale in the peasant movement.
history in the context of the CARP framework. By 2003, organizationally and politically, the influence of UNORKA-PEACE had been significantly felt in virtually the whole of Luzon, central Philippines, and the plantation belt of Davao-Cotabato, although it was uneven and varied between and within these regions. But this network was able to position itself in areas where major land reform “battles” were being fought, such as Bondoc Peninsula, Central Luzon, in Bicol provinces (including Masbate and Camarines Sur), Negros Island, and in the plantation belt of the Davao-Cotabato provinces. By 2001, according to interviews with various peasant organizations, NGOs, and DAR officials, and based on NGO and DAR records, it appears that the UNORKA-PEACE network had the widest extent of organizational and political influence in terms of quantity of land, number of agrarian disputes, and number of peasant households directly engaged in the land reform struggle within the reformist framework of CARP.  

Other peasant groups, although with relatively less influence in the context of land struggles, emerged during this period. One of these groups is the PKSK (Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahan sa Kanayunan, National Federation of Organizations in the Countryside). The PKSK traces its provenance to its association with the independent socialist group BISIG and its NGO allies. The KAISAHAN (Kaisahan Tungo sa Kaunlaran ng Kanayunan at Repormang Pansakahan or Unity towards the Development of the Countryside and Agrarian Reform), an NGO specializing in legal assistance to peasants also supported the formation of PKSK. Organizationally and politically, PKSK’s significant presence has been felt in regions 3, 4, and 8 and on some plantations in Southwestern Mindanao. Again, like all other peasant organizations and NGOs, the degree of its organizational and political influence is highly uneven and varied between and within these regions. Moreover, the PKSK tends to focus its work on local governance-related policy advocacy aimed at strengthening the electoral political party that the PKSK is closely identified with, the Citizens’ Action Party or Akbayan.

Another group to emerge during this period is the Pambansang Katipunan ng Makabayanang Magbubukid (PKMM, National Federation of Nationalist Peasants), which is a relatively vibrant national peasant movement associated with the Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya (KPD, Movement for National Democracy). They are national in scope, although their support is strongest in Central Luzon, Negros, and some parts of northern Mindanao.

Another group to come into being during this period was the KASAMA-KA, or Federation of People’s Organizations in the Countryside (Kalipunan ng mga Samahan ng mga Magsasaka sa Kanayunan). This group is a mixture of peasant groups engaged in watershed management, sustainable agriculture,
cooperative-building, and land reform struggle. Its orientation can be traced to its relationship with a national network of NGOs, PhilNET-RDI (Philippine Network of Rural Development Institutes), which is a spinoff NGO from the socioeconomic section of the PPI, another major ex-ND NGO. In terms of land reform–related initiatives, this network has significant presence in regions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11. Again, like all other networks, the degree of political and organizational influence of KASAMA-KA/PhilNET-RDI in terms of the land redistribution campaign is highly uneven between and within these regions.

Meanwhile, the coconut sector–based KAMMPIL has been able to maintain some of its mass base; it has varying degrees of influence in Southern Luzon, central Philippines, and southern and northern Mindanao. The BUKLOD (Bukluran ng Malayang Magbubukid, a breakaway group from the FFF) has been able to maintain a presence in a few areas in regions 4 and 5, but undertaking less important land reform struggles and amidst some internal organizational problems. The FFF, which has remained under the firm control of the Montemayor family, is a more or less constant advocate for land reform, with a high profile leadership (the Montemayors) and has been able to maintain enclaves of loyal followers in a few areas of the country. Finally, the AMA, which has been closely identified with the (old) Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), has been able to maintain some of its original mass base in regions 2 and 3, though on a much constricted scale, amidst series of internal divisions.

In addition, relatively smaller peasant groups within the reformist framework of CARP have emerged from the evolving ex-ND political communities. One of these is the “Makabayan,” which is identified with one of the groups originally associated with the “third bloc” that later merged with the vibrant trade-union based political movement Sanlakas. Another is PKMP which is a peasant organization connected to some ex-CPP cadres who first joined the Maoist bloc in the 1993 split, but who were later expelled; they subsequently helped form the KPD. These cadres later organized some service NGOs, and together with PKMP have been focusing their work on international issues such as neoliberal agricultural trade.

The PPI itself has continued to assist scattered local peasant groups in their claim-making campaigns within the CARP framework, particularly in some areas in Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, and Central Mindanao; some groups it has worked with include surviving portions of the DKMP, as well as what remains of the FFF. The PPI made several unsuccessful attempts to build broad coalitions of rural-oriented organizations, including the Kilos-Saka, which is a coalition that focuses on agricultural trade-related policy issues. For legal reasons linked to the 1992–1993 ND split, the PPI would assume a new, different corporate name and identity by 2005: Centro Saka, Inc. (CSI).
Moreover, the Philippine Development Institute (PDI), an NGO that was originally founded to do relief and rehabilitation work for communities adversely affected by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the early 1990s, expanded its work to include land reform in Central Luzon, and has assisted in establishing a region-wide organization called Nagkakaisang Magsasaka sa Gitnang Luson (NMGL, United Farmers in Central Luzon). And the Kasangyahan Foundation, Inc. (KFI) continues to work with some land reformed rubber plantations in Southwestern Mindanao.

Finally, there are other NGOs that, while not engaging in direct organizing work and political mobilizations with peasants, have played important roles in the land reform struggle. KAISAHAN and Saligan are two groups that provide legal assistance to peasants struggling for land within the reformist framework of CARP. Meanwhile, three major NGOs continue to carry out systematic research related to land reform: the PPI (later as CSI), Management and Organizational Development for Empowerment (MODE), and AFRIM. To varying extents, different peasant organizations work with these NGOs.

Most of these NGOs are funded by the Dutch agency ICCO. In 2005, these ICCO-supported groups formed a loose coalition called “Kilos AR” tasked to coordinate common national campaigns. Unfortunately, however, by 2006, there were no other significant development funding agencies (apart from ICCO) that provided support to the various organizations working on agrarian reform in the Philippines. This leaves the social movement and civil society efforts in particular and the land reform campaign in general in a very uncertain and precarious condition: If ICCO were to decide to pull their funding from land reform campaigns, the adverse effect on pro-poor redistributive reform efforts in the country would be far reaching. The creeping trend within ICCO by 2006 towards more “development-oriented projects” as opposed to the inherently political redistributive reform campaigns is starting to sound the alarm bells with many rural activists. Although there is no doubt these organizations are well rooted and so would continue to exist somehow even if external funding pulled out, their capacity as national reform campaigners would undoubtedly be adversely affected.

It is important to note that since the Garilao DAR, the old state co-opted peasant organizations that were used by the past conservative DAR leadership have been almost completely isolated and relegated to the periphery of the land reform process.

These various peasant groups relate with each other in a variety of fraternal ways, formal and informal. Formally, the most politically important peasant groups that are engaging the state on the land reform agenda (UNORKA, PAKISAMA, and PKSK) are organizationally united within an
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electoral political party (i.e., the Citizens Action Party or Akbayan). Formed by a variety of left wing political groups not identified with either the Maoist or Leninist groups, Akbayan has garnered seats in Congress and numerous local government positions. One of its strategic political and policy agendas is land reform, and among its most important political and electoral sources of support are members and sympathizers of the three major peasant associations cited above. Hence, despite historically and ideologically charged animosities between these three peasant groups, they have still been able to discuss and pursue common agendas and actions facilitated within the institutional framework of Akbayan. More broadly, the three peasant groups mentioned above, plus other peasant organizations, have debated and converged on common political and policy issues and launched common collective actions between 1988 and 2002 through various state–society interface mechanisms, such as “Project 40 Now” from 1995 to 1998 and the “Task Force Fast-Track” in 2000.

However, due to various historical, ideological, political (and even personality) differences between these different peasant groups and their allies, relationships between them have continued to be tension filled, and cleavages have persisted. Tensions over territory (both political and geographic) and competition for ever-shrinking funds from abroad continue to fuel animosities between the various groups and their NGO allies. Since 2003, there have been several efforts to organize broader coalitions of peasant organizations and NGOs but without much success. Arguably, the only two prospects for a stable ideologically and politically broad peasant coalition are the Laban ng Masa (LnM, Struggle of the Masses), which has political movements as its base, and Kilos-AR, which has NGOs as its main base. Under attack from the Maoists (the latter started to assassinate some of the leaders of other leftist groups) on the one hand, and in the midst of the crisis of national governance in 2005, with President Arroyo accused of massive corruption and electoral fraud, on the other, all non-Maoist left wing political organizations and other autonomous NGOs and social movements gathered together and forged a historic unity: Laban ng Masa. Chaired by left wing activists and an academic, former University of the Philippines president Francisco Nemenzo, Laban ng Masa has been trying to develop a kind of progressive alternative that would exist somewhere between the Arroyo administration and the Maoist communist party. Whether or not and to what extent Laban ng Masa will become a viable and important political actor will be seen soon. A recent important cross-sectoral coalition has been spearheaded by PARRDS and UNORKA together with Kilos-AR in their particular work with the politically influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). Responding to various
agrarian reform-related pressing issues, partly sparked by the assassination of UNORKA leader Eric Cabanit in April 2006, and the unabated killings of peasant activists nationwide, the CBCP decided to (re)convene its National Rural Congress (NRC) in January 2008 (the first NRC was convened by the CBCP in 1967) largely in order to activate the support of the Church to the peasant struggle for land, food and dignity.

As a result of the emergence of these various formations of autonomous peasant organizations, NGOs, and political movements, combined with the widespread erosion of the CPP’s influence both within the progressive movement’s circle and in the national polity more generally, an era marked by militant but pragmatic rural social movements has ensued. This has had a positive impact on CARP implementation.

There are, however, common weaknesses among these peasant organizations and their allies, in addition to their continued relative fragmentation: For one, their political strategies are overly focused on the expropriation of big private landholdings within the scope of CARP. Over-emphasis on this land type has, on most occasions, been at the expense of other crucial issues such as the redistribution of public lands and tenancy reforms through leasehold. The explicit or implicit acceptance among most autonomous rural social movements of the mistaken notion that redistributive reform does not occur in public lands and leasehold largely accounts for the lack of attention given to these issues. The lack of systematic attention to the “missing” landholdings within the CARP scope is also common to organizations. These peasant associations engage the state only on policy issues that are included on the official policy scope, such as the landholdings included in the official land redistribution targets. This explains the absence of any significant, coherent, and sustained protest from the peasant groups and NGOs against the exclusion of huge quantities of land from the official redistribution scope. In addition, these peasant groups and NGOs generally give attention only to the specific landholdings on which they can directly intervene, which are, in general, those areas included in their foreign-funded projects; they tend to lose sight of their strategic role in the more comprehensive (political) challenge to resolve the land question in society as a whole.

Furthermore, between and within these organizations and networks, political strategies on how to carry out effective campaigns for land reform differ quite remarkably. An extreme case is the KMP, which continues to uphold its “expose and oppose” “genuine land reform will be implemented after the seizure of state power by the worker-peasant alliance” framework. Thus, it does not support CARP, and instead works to undermine it. As such, its strategy is to focus on media work and political networking, nationally and
internationally, capitalizing on carefully selected negative land reform cases that have big political value to convince the national and international public that CARP is “pro-landlord” and “anti-peasant.” This explains its intermittent national/international campaigns such as that involving the Hacienda Looc in Batangas. However, a few local peasant groups associated with the KMP have actually worked within CARP for redistributive reform gains.42

The other extreme is more of a “tendency” than a systematic strategy (and there are really no specific peasant groups and NGOs that fit it more generally and permanently): traditional and conservative organizations relying on a few charismatic, well-connected leaders and NGO staff to follow up cases in various DAR and government offices, not using militant forms of actions and avoiding confrontation with state officials. These make use of what is pejoratively called a “paper-chasing strategy,” amounting to the mere follow-up of the whereabouts of a case and its documents. They fully support some DAR officials’ mistaken notion of “conflict-free partnership” achieved through peaceful dialogues and friendly negotiations. The organizing work at the ground level in this kind of strategy is unsystematic and sporadic. Some peasant organizations and their NGO allies mentioned earlier have demonstrated this tendency from time to time.

In the end, what matters is not only the quantity of peasant organizations but also their “quality.” “Quality” here means a high degree of the twin foundations of peasant organizational power discussed in Chapter 1 — autonomy and capacity — relative to the task of pushing for land redistribution. Not all of the organizations mentioned above, not all of the NGOs working with the peasants, possess, in consistent fashion in the context of the struggle for land, these twin foundations. This is partly demonstrated in the degree of political and organizational influence they have.

Overall, and in longer historical view despite the encouraging emergence of militant but pragmatic peasant organizations and NGOs, the ranks of those that engage in consistent and coherent work on land reform remain thin and weak relative to the Herculean challenge of redistributive land reform.

5.3 REFORMIST INITIATIVES BY PRO-REFORM STATE ACTORS “FROM ABOVE”

As explained in the theoretical chapter of this study, state actors do not only implement public policies in response to societal pressures. On many occasions, pro-reform state actors, motivated by a variety of factors, such as concern for political legitimacy and democratization, autonomously push
for progressive policy, institutional reforms, and reformist policies such as redistributive land reform, even when these run counter to elite interests. This section demonstrates and explains how, why, and to what extent pro-reform state actors within the Philippine agrarian reform bureaucracy emerged over time. It also looks at the impact of the emergence of these state reformists on the implementation processes and outcomes of redistributive land reform. The section underscores the strengths and weaknesses of state actors in the context of redistributive land reform policy implementation.

The DAR has a huge bureaucracy: 15,000 personnel nationwide. The staff has been recruited into the bureaucracy at different times, many dating as early as the Marcos era. The top DAR leadership (secretary, undersecretaries, assistant secretaries) are “political appointees,” their terms of office are co-terminous with the appointing power (i.e., the president of the republic). Middle level officials (bureau chiefs, regional and provincial directors, and national-regional-provincial adjudicators) are also presidential appointees, but their terms of office are not co-terminous with the appointing power; they can secure permanent positions according to the rules of the Civil Service Commission. Below the director and PARO levels are numerous rank-and-file employees. Like other government employees, the DAR employees and officials are not well paid.

As said earlier, the various employees and officials enter the DAR bureaucracy through a variety of appointment and recruitment channels, and like other government agencies, “political patrons” play a role in many such appointments and recruitment. For example, a member of Congress, before a vote for the DAR’s annual budget, could ask the DAR to hire this or that person for this or that position. Local and national politicians and other influential elite are widely believed to have been able to facilitate the employment of many DAR officials and employees. Moreover, many of these elites are able to block efforts of the DAR leadership to discharge or transfer DAR employees or officials.

Over time and to varying degrees, the DAR bureaucracy has been subject to the power influences of anti- and pro-reform state and societal actors. However, the political and geographic locations of lower level employees and officials put them in a situation that makes them most vulnerable to anti-reform influences and manipulation. Most of these employees live and work in local communities that are the bastions of power of the landlords and their allies. They face the daily risk of landlord reprisal and constant harassment. This is aggravated by the fact that if a landlord accuses them of any administrative or criminal wrongdoing (e.g., “abuse of authority” or “trespassing on private
property”) when carrying out their official duties, they are left alone to defend themselves. Legally the DAR cannot provide them with lawyers or money to hire lawyers. Employees retiring from service are unable to receive retirement benefits as long as such cases are pending against them. The anti-reform forces have in fact exploited this legal technicality to pressure lower level officials not to proceed with expropriation. Some PAROs and MAROs have dozens of administrative and criminal charges filed against them by landlords. Thus, many local DAR officials, who are supposed to be frontline CARP implementers, have become effectively immobilized. In comparison, and more generally, regional and national level DAR officials do not suffer as much the daily pressure and harassment by the landlords.

This brief background on the institutional set up of the DAR bureaucracy provides insights into the internal dynamics within the bureaucracy and how it engages other state and societal actors. Against this background, we can derive a better understanding of the various types of DAR employees and officials: “fence-sitters,” rent-seekers, those who are outright anti-land reform, and those who are actively pro-land reform. These various categories are found not only in the national-level bureaucracy but also within the intermediate (regional and provincial) and local (municipal) levels. But such categories are dynamically altered in every location and level of the bureaucracy over time through the recursive interactions between state and societal actors, both pro-reform and anti-reform.

It is important to note that the local-level bureaucracies, just like the local peasant groups, need allies at the top of the DAR bureaucracy. If they do not perceive support from allies at the top, they usually remain fence-sitters or are even recruited to anti-reformism. Thus, the leadership at the national DAR tends to be mirrored at the lower levels of the bureaucracy. The influence of national reformists plus the direct engagement by autonomous rural social movement actors is crucial to the eventual behaviour of the numerous lower echelon, front line DAR employees.

Moreover, the DAR is embedded within the broader state apparatus and bureaucracy that directly and indirectly facilitates or blocks the former’s efforts to implement land reform. For example, the DAR must contend with Congress in terms of yearly decisions on its budget allocations to the various CARP components. Yet historically, Congress has been the bastion of landowning classes and their allies. The most serious anti-reform attacks against CARP have thus come from this institution. The DAR also contends with a judiciary that, like Congress, is known to be heavily influenced by the
elite, including the landed elite. It is therefore not uncommon to see landlords use the judiciary (from the local courts up to the Supreme Court) to block the implementation of land reform.

Finally, the DAR deals directly with a complex web of state agencies, large and small, in the everyday implementation of land reform. As explained elsewhere in this study, more than twenty agencies are directly involved in the various aspects of CARP implementation. Many of these agencies have demonstrated little sympathy for the cause of land reform and the interests of the landless and land-poor peasants and small farmers. For example, the Department of Agriculture (DA, and many of its attached bureaus) has almost always been led by anti-land reform secretaries who have advocated agribusiness-led agriculture, except perhaps for the short-lived stint as DA secretary by FFF’s Leonardo Montemayor under the Macapagal-Arroyo presidency. Another agency, the DENR, which has a big role in CARP implementation, has been interested more in mining and commercial forestry than in the plight of landless and land-poor peasants and land reform. Other strategic and influential departments, especially Finance and Trade and Industry, have, time and time again, demonstrated their lack of sympathy for agrarian reform. This lack of widespread support for agrarian reform within the Philippine bureaucracy not only makes land reform implementation difficult; it obstructs the reform process periodically.

Nevertheless, it has to be underscored that despite the entrenched anti-land reform leaderships of these agencies, smaller pro-land reform enclaves have emerged within some of these agencies since the early 1990s. For example, within the DENR some progressive tendencies were demonstrated at the top and middle levels of leadership in the 1990s. There have also been some reformist enclaves within the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), an agency that used to be attached to the DA. Formed in the mid-1990s, the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), an inter-agency group tasked with addressing the poverty problem in the country has worked closely with DAR leaderships. While the NAPC has not delivered its promise of dramatic poverty reduction (see, e.g., Reid, 2005), it has nevertheless contributed to shielding agrarian reform from systematic anti-reform attacks from within the state bureaucracy, at least in the 1990s.

Before Ernesto Garilao and his team took office at the DAR and launched reformist initiatives within the bureaucracy in mid-1992, the DAR had been largely in the hands of the combined power blocs of politically conservative as well as technical-bureaucratic officials, neither of which were effective in carrying out redistributive land reform.
The Marcos regime installed Conrado Estrella at the helm of PD 27 (rice and corn land reform) implementation. His perspective on peasant organizations was as necessary administrative adjuncts to the state bureaucracy. He treated peasants as “clientele” and his DAR personnel as “change agents” (see Estrella, 1978). Thus, state co-opted peasant organizations were formed and maintained. The result, however, in terms of effective land redistribution, was not as optimistically predicted or claimed.

The first four years of CARP implementation under the Aquino administration were marked by public scandals involving the rigging of the 1988 land registration campaign, anomalous real estate deals, widespread land reform evasion by landlords, effective evasion of land reform by Hacienda Luisita (the then president’s sugar cane plantation), several changes in the DAR leadership, and the non-participation of major autonomous peasant organizations, as well as a steady stream of landlord-sponsored legislative initiatives intended to further dilute CARP. Within this overall unfavourable political climate for land reform, program implementation was slow and limited.

Many real estate speculators exploited the program’s provisions on voluntarily offered land (VOS). In direct collusion with corrupt DAR officials, they sold marginal lands to the government at sky-high prices. The discovery of such widespread fraud during the late 1980s caused a public scandal, leading to the fall of several top DAR officials, including the department’s first secretary under the CARP era, Philip Juico (1987–1989). Personally close to President Aquino, Juico was unwilling to provoke either the landlords or the military, and so he refused to subject any private landholdings to compulsory acquisition. He focused instead on distributing public lands and rice and corn lands, the landlords of which were relatively less politically influential. He was also responsible for the early facilitation of leaseback contracts with a number of multinationals in Mindanao. These contract terms would prove onerous, including the “one-plantation, one-collective-title, one-cooperative” policy for the large plantations that would later prove disastrous to the interests of poor farm workers. He facilitated the early efforts for the effective exclusion of Hacienda Luisita from actual land redistribution as well. While tolerating a handful of liberal reform advocates within the DAR bureaucracy, the politically conservative Juico headed a department known to be plagued by widespread rent-seeking and inefficiency and dominated by supporters of conservative reform; each reinforced the other.

Mirian Defensor-Santiago (June to December 1989), a former judge and chief of the immigration commission, was handpicked by President Aquino to replace Juico. Like her predecessor, Santiago had no experience with land
reform. By that time, however, she had gained a reputation as an effective and committed “graft-buster” and was considered the most popular national official in the Aquino administration. The administration badly needed a person like Santiago to restore the public’s trust and confidence in CARP. But Santiago appeared to have a different idea about priorities. Under her administration, one of the DAR’s achievements was to clinch a formal agreement with the Department of National Defense for the latter to help the DAR take back lands “illegally occupied by peasants” or distributed by the communist NPA. She would later claim that the DAR’s top level bureaucracy had been infiltrated by communists, referring to the liberal reform advocates (which included Gerry Bulatao, who would later become an undersecretary for operations) who had become critical of her. While it appeared that Santiago was the type of DAR secretary that the landlords might have wanted (her husband was from a landowning family), her well-known ambition in national politics got her into trouble with political leaders in Congress who were already worried about her media popularity. The imperatives of party politics within Congress prevailed. Santiago was not confirmed as secretary (the appointment of a cabinet member must be confirmed by a bicameral committee composed of representatives of both houses of the Congress).

When President Aquino appointed Florencio Abad (December 1989 to April 1990), a left wing social-democrat and member of the House of Representatives, as the new DAR secretary, many observers interpreted the move as an effort to win back the confidence of the progressive section of the peasantry and to restore public and media confidence in CARP. A liberal reform advocate, Abad had authored a progressive land reform bill in 1987 that called for a zero retention right for landlords. His bill was defeated, and he later voted against the final law that was approved (i.e., CARP). Vowing to stretch the limits of the law to favour the peasants, Abad accepted the challenge of implementing a law that he had voted against, banking on collaboration with autonomous peasant organizations to help him succeed. He also vowed to continue and expand the pro-reform state-society alliance strategy being pursued by a minority group of reformers led by Gerry Bulatao. But he was immediately confronted with a difficult case in which the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), headed by an influential elite (particularly Jose Concepcion, who was close to President Aquino and the top leadership of the Catholic Church), wanted to convert a 230-hectare government-owned stretch of farmland in Cavite into an industrial complex. The peasants opposed the land use conversion; Abad sided with the peasants. However, the pro-land use conversion forces within and outside the state overpowered this pro-reform alliance. In retaliation for his position in
the Cavite case, Abad was summarily refused confirmation as DAR secretary by Congress despite unanimous support by peasant organizations across the political spectrum. President Aquino did not defend Abad before Congress. He resigned in April 1990.

The last DAR secretary during the Aquino administration was Benjamin Leong (mid-1990 to June 1992), a senior undersecretary and representative of the conservative reform bloc in the department. Described as “neither pro-peasant nor anti-landlord,” he got quick confirmation of his appointment. In the meantime, many of the liberal reformists within the DAR had already resigned after the Abad controversy, leaving the bureaucracy in the hands of conservative officials and ensuring the department’s uncontested focus on the less contentious components of CARP through the use of less contentious land acquisition and distribution modalities. The department cemented relationships with peasant groups that had been traditionally co-opted by the state.

The quick turnover in the national DAR leadership during this period negatively impacted the local DAR bureaucracy, where the frontline CARP implementers were positioned. The five turnovers in rapid succession contributed to demoralization and demobilization among local officials and ordinary employees. During the transition periods, CARP implementation at the local level usually came to a stop. Ordinary employees were uninspired to work. In many cases too, anticipating a new national leadership, local officials withheld their accomplishment reports, awaiting the new DAR leadership to which they would submit achievement reports to impress the incoming administration. Finally, during these periods of internal bureaucratic problems, local DAR officials who were traditionally fence-sitters (the most numerous type nationwide) tended to remain fence-sitters, and some were even recruited to outright anti-reformism, taking part in illegal land use conversions and overpriced VOS transactions, as typified by the Garchitorena land scam in Bicol.

In short, from 1988 to 1992, the reform implementation landscape was dominated by several issues which demonstrated or contributed to the further weakening of the program: the successful evasion of President Aquino’s Hacienda Luisita of effective land redistribution; onerous terms in the early leaseback arrangements with multinational corporations in Mindanao; corruption scandals within the bureaucracy; and the arrest of KMP’s chairperson, Jaime Tadeo, in an *estafa* case filed by Marcos in 1981 in an apparent attempt to silence Tadeo, who was then the leader of AMGL in
Central Luzon. Tadeo was jailed for three years and three months. (President Ramos granted Tadeo parole in August 1993 partly due to the sustained lobbying by DAR Secretary Ernesto Garilao as part of the government’s effort to politically stabilize the agrarian reform front.) These events helped dampen the interest in the program among the foreign donors that the government had earlier hoped would take the lead in financing it. Ironically, the problem during this period was not that the funds were less than expected but rather the inability of the DAR to spend the funds, limited as they were. Seriously hobbled by these unfavourable developments, the program would need the fresh, activist leadership of Ernesto Garilao under the Ramos administration to bolster its remaining capabilities.

The 1992 electoral victory of Fidel Ramos, a former Philippine Constabulary general during the Marcos dictatorship and defence minister in the Aquino administration, elicited grim predictions about the fate of the already much weakened CARP. Initial predictions about the imminent demise of CARP were framed within the broader projection that Ramos would be a “military general-president,” and that a return to an authoritarian regime was forthcoming. Indeed one of the plans in Ramos’s campaign platform had been to increase the retention limit under CARP from 5 to 50 hectares in an apparent attempt to court the support of the landowning class. Soon after being sworn to office, the new president started to recruit military officers into his administration. But it did not take long for the grim predictions to be proven partly incorrect, at least on the agrarian reform front.

When Ramos took office in June 1992, the land reform agenda within the state was somehow transformed. The elections had greatly divided the elite, while the candidacy of Fidel Ramos failed to rally a majority of voters, and the new president thus entered office with a very weak electoral mandate. As a result, he sought to broaden his political base, and it was in this context that some reform-minded civil society activists were recruited into important positions in the state bureaucracy, including the DAR. Meanwhile, it is also relevant to note that Fidel Ramos and his wife did not come from any big landowning families in the country. This could also partly explain what Gerry Bulatao, who was a top DAR official during the Aquino administration and part of the Ramos period, said in comparing the attitude towards land reform between the Aquino and Ramos administrations: “There were more pressure from the family of Cory Aquino than from the family of Fidel Ramos” for us to make anti-land reform decisions or favour presidential friends in our decisions. “And,” Bulatao continued, “if there was pressure [from President Ramos], it was done in a subtle way. It was so subtle that you cannot even
... you’re not even sure, that it was there .... I think there is not much debate to say that Ramos was never an anti-land reform president, as compared to Aquino.”

Fidel Ramos appointed Ernesto Garilao as the new DAR secretary. Garilao had previously been the head of the politically conservative PBSP, one of the country’s largest mainstream NGOs, which was funded by the country’s top corporations and foreign donors. He was loosely identified with the broad social-democratic political community. Garilao himself believed that he had been selected by Ramos to become the DAR secretary among other possible appointees because he was “not politically controversial — considering that at that time agrarian reform was very controversial.” He had not really been directly involved with land reform before 1992 despite his NGO background, and he had been loosely identified with the political community of the conservative reformists. But in his first few days in office, he made the crucial move to convince Ramos to drop his campaign promise of a 50-hectare retention limit, which he succeeded in doing without much opposition. Ramos, according to Garilao, explained that the talk about a possible shift to a 50-hectare retention limit had been mere “election propaganda.” Garilao said that when he asked Ramos whether the latter has landholdings in any farm size categories that the DAR should be extra sensitive about, the president replied no and subsequently gave him the go ahead to proceed and cover all farm landholdings based on what the law stated.

To do this, Garilao brought several respected NGO activists into the DAR and gave them key positions — for example, Hector Soliman (undersecretary for legal affairs), Clifford Burkeley (head executive assistant and later assistant secretary for legal affairs), Joe Grageda (bureau director and later a provincial and regional top official) and Jose Olano (undersecretary for operations), to name a few — as well as Gerry Bulatao (undersecretary for operations) later in Garilao’s term of office. After making sure that President Ramos and his family did not have any landed interest, Garilao proceed to frame his plan: “The vision was there, and it was very simple — more lands to be distributed at a shorter time, faster rate of resolving agrarian disputes. So I approached some friends from the NGO community, and I told them that since it’s them who know how to make these things work they should join me in running the department. And most of them did.” He also consolidated the ranks of the liberal reformers within the bureaucracy and gave more important positions to some of them. He then proceeded to launch a “clean-up” operation within the bureaucracy. His other major step was to seek informal consultations with members of the broad community of autonomous NGOs and peasant organizations, to the surprise of many of them. Garilao explained, “When
President Ramos appointed me secretary ... I brought in a number of NGO development practitioners to become agrarian reform state implementers. We adhered to the principle that for the redistributive program to succeed, it must have the support of the public in general, and of major constituency in particular, the landless farmers. Since that was not present in 1992, we had to develop strong constituency support.”

He later instituted both formal and informal consultative groups involving various peasant groups and NGOs. Taken together, these moves suggested that he would be more concerned with ensuring political legitimacy — rather than private capital accumulation — of the Philippine state.

Garilao’s sense of belonging to the politically progressive, even left wing social democrats from the Ateneo de Manila University, many of whom were staunch land reform advocates, like Abad, would largely explain his consistent pro-reform stance. Further, Garilao’s reformist stance after 1992 can be largely explained by the influence of the radical reformers who were able to position themselves within the DAR bureaucracy. Moreover, Garilao’s political calculation that it was highly likely that the sympathy and support of the broad peasant movements and their allies for his reformist actions would in turn strengthen his leverage within the broader state bureaucracy also partly proved correct.

Recognizing CARP’s flaws and ongoing landlord opposition to it, Garilao largely followed the main approach and focus of his predecessors: redistributing relatively less politically contentious lands through the relatively less contentious land acquisition and distribution modalities. The main difference he made could be seen in the relatively swift implementation of these components. He more than doubled the combined achievements of the twenty years of the Marcos and Aquino administrations (1972–1992) within the much shorter span of six years.

The position of the DAR between 1992 and 1998 thus differed from that in the first four years of CARP implementation in several ways. Garilao appears to have had a dynamic “two-way” relationship with the executive branch of government, especially with the Office of the President. He was able to “stabilize” the agrarian reform front, and in doing so, earned the government’s confidence, or tolerance, as partly demonstrated by his appointment as head of the anti-poverty program. This appointment put the role of the DAR, and Garilao himself, in a broader anti-poverty framework, further strengthening the pro–(land) reform policy current within the government. Garilao demonstrated ability and willingness at times to challenge anti–(land) reform policy currents in other agencies and groups of state actors. Initially paired
with a DA secretary who was anti–land reform (Roberto Sebastian, President of banana export company Marsman), Garilao showed most of the time that he could withstand conflicting interagency priorities and push their outcomes in his favour, though at times when the private capital accumulation imperatives for the government were too great, he set the political legitimacy task aside. The Garilao DAR lost a considerable number of “battles,” like the Mapalad and Hacienda Looc cases — most of which had something to do with land use conversions from farmlands to non-agricultural uses involving elites who were well-connected at the national level in the context of the real estate boom of that period. Moreover, through Garilao’s efforts, liberal reform advocates became deeply and widely entrenched within the DAR. One way Garilao used to convert officials and employees to a reformist orientation was to expose them to militant, autonomous peasant groups and NGOs. The Garilao DAR also gave priority to systematic data-banking and improving the quality of DAR data: computerizing the data-banking system, appointing professionals to do the job, and setting up checks and balances for data input, output, and processing.

The reformist tendency at the national DAR had an effect on the local bureaucracies. For one, the appointment of progressive, radical reformers in regional and provincial DAR positions brought the reformist leadership closer to the rank-and-file field officials and employees. The signal from the national leadership of its seriousness about reform was picked up by field personnel, leading numerous fence-sitters to jump onto the nationwide bandwagon of reformism. This signal also directly helped neutralize, if not isolate, openly anti-reform DAR officials and employees. Overall, the reformist signals at the top contributed to the consolidation and expansion of pro-reform field personnel. Autonomous peasant groups and NGOs started to interact with these local DAR reformers, arguably leading to the earlier-mentioned reformist “ratchet effect.”

Through such reformist initiatives, the Garilao DAR had almost completed the implementation of redistribution of “softer” landholdings. This strategy was a conscious one on the part of Garilao, because he did not want to antagonize the landowning classes, at least not prematurely, so as not to invite any untimely backlash while trying to gain more ground with reform.\(^63\) In a lot of ways this approach reminds us of Hirschman’s notion of “reform by stealth” in the context of Colombian land reform in the early 1960s (see Hirschman, 1967). But the two post-Marcos administrations of Aquino and Ramos also left pending the full and decisive expropriation and redistribution of the vast landholdings of Marcos’ cronies, particularly the lands of Danding Cojuangco, the Benedictos, and the Floirendos, despite the CARP mandate to
quickly expropriate and redistribute these landholdings to peasants (see, e.g., data in Garilao, 1998; Morales, 1999). Unlike Fidel Ramos, whose electoral mandate was extremely narrow, Joseph Estrada (July 1998 to January 2001) was elected with a phenomenally high electoral mandate. Partly for this reason, unlike the Ramos administration, which consistently sought broad political alliances and consensus among various political groups and sectors, the Estrada presidency banked on its popular mandate and may not have felt obligated to reach out to other sectors and groups that did not support him in the electoral contest. However, some influential sectors and groups (like the top leadership of the Catholic Church, as well as factions of the elite and the media) opposed Estrada from the very start. He did not have the typical profile of an elite occupying the top government post in the country. A former movie actor, Estrada was a university dropout with \textit{carabao} (“bad”) English, a well-known womanizer, and a gambler. While he was not part of the landed elite (coming from an urban family), like his predecessors (and successor), he had close allies in the ranks of the landowning classes. During his stint as senator from 1987 to 1992, he is best remembered for voting to oust the US military bases in the country and for sponsoring two famous rural reform-oriented bills: expansion of irrigation infrastructures and protection and further breeding of the Philippine water buffaloes (\textit{carabaos}), two laws that were never fully funded.

President Estrada appointed Horacio Morales Jr. as DAR secretary. Morales was a well-known figure among NGOs. He was the former chairperson of the underground revolutionary National Democratic Front (NDF) in the 1970s until his arrest and detention in the early 1980s. Released from jail during the 1986 regime transition, he then joined and headed the PRRM, a politically conservative NGO founded in the 1950s, and transformed it into an autonomous, progressive organization. He also co-founded the Movement for Popular Democracy (MPD, or simply, “PopDem”), which soon became a spinoff of the ND movement.

In fact Morales at first did not want the DAR position. What he wanted was the DA secretary post. However, President Estrada apparently already promised the DA post to his running mate Edgardo Angara who lost the vice-presidential race. Angara would assume an appointed cabinet position only a year after the election. Besides, President Estrada thought that somebody who knew the left politics and social movement dynamics should head the politically contentious DAR bureaucracy and implement the land reform program. For such a job, Morales was the clear choice. Morales eventually agreed.
In general, Morales took his cue from Ernesto Garilao on how to work as DAR secretary, but with some revisions and modifications, both deliberate and otherwise. Like Garilao, Morales recruited progressive NGO and academic activists to occupy top positions within the DAR, most of whom had long and deep knowledge of agrarian and rural reform and extensive exposure to militant peasant movements (e.g., Pancho Lara, Toinette Raquiza, Carlito Añonuevo, and Conrado Navarro, to name a few). Like Garilao, Morales recruited within the ranks of his immediate political community: ex-NDs and “PopDems,” and, like the Garilao DAR, the Morales DAR first consolidated its own alliances with its political community. Like the Garilao DAR, the Morales DAR adopted as a strategy the pro-reform alliance with a broad spectrum of autonomous rural social movements. Morales decided basically to continue the reforms started by Garilao (see Morales, 1999).

Changes within and outside the DAR, however, would result in differences between the Garilao and Morales administrations in terms of implementation processes and actual redistribution outcomes. First, a substantial portion of the autonomous rural social movement groups refused to critically engage the Estrada-Morales administration on the issue of agrarian reform. The subsequent problems in the relationship between some of these rural social movement groups and the Morales DAR were subject to varying, often competing, interpretations. But whatever the differences between Morales and these rural social movements, their impacts would be quite substantially negative on the process and outcome of land reform, since the pro-reform forces were divided, and so, relatively weakened. Second, the Morales DAR suffered amidst the negative political developments at the presidential level that affected CARP (e.g., President Estrada calling Danding Cojuangco “godfather of land reform” and directly lobbying for some of the land use conversion applications of his friends). By 2000, the political turmoil leading to the ouster of Estrada (on charges of corruption — see Reyes, 2001) had, in one way or another, derailed the course of land reform. Third, these unfavourable political developments in state-society relations aggravated the already difficult and problematic state of the land reform front. Recall that unlike the Garilao DAR, the Morales DAR was confronted with the most politically contentious private landholdings. Fourth, Morales failed to resist the demands of President Estrada that he take on as undersecretary for the Policy Planning and Legal Affairs Office (PPLAO) Danilo Lara, who was a former vice governor of Cavite, and close associate Juanito Remulla, both of whom were well-known anti-land reform officials in Cavite engaged in massive land use conversions for speculative real estate deals. Finally, in contrast to Garilao’s, the Morales management
style was not “hands-on.” This had some adverse impacts on his work within the bureaucracy.

The continuity and change of reformist leadership at the DAR national office during the Morales period also had an effect on the local bureaucracy. There was, to some extent, a demoralization and relative demobilization among the DAR field personnel during the period of increasing likelihood of Estrada (and so Morales) being ousted from power. Many local DAR personnel stopped reporting local accomplishments, trying to “save” them for the anticipated new leadership in the event of the ouster of Estrada. Again, land redistribution during 2000 and 2001 suffered due to transition politics.71

As a result of these interlinked negative currents, the Morales DAR had a yearly average redistribution output that was half that of the Garilao DAR, although the percentage shares of highly contentious lands and highly contentious land acquisition and distribution modalities were far higher than his predecessor’s.72 The Estrada presidency, and so the Morales DAR, lasted for only thirty months; it was ousted through a popular mobilization by largely urban-based middle and upper classes, supported by the church and the media, and backed by the military with charges of corruption.73

Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, daughter of Diosdado Macapagal, who had formerly served as president (1961–1965), took over the presidential seat in January 2001. Macapagal-Arroyo is best known for her neoliberal economics; she sponsored the neoliberal agricultural policy reforms while she was senator, and after assuming the presidency, she vowed to deepen and widen such reforms. Her husband, Miguel Arroyo, hailed from a big landowning family in Negros Occidental. But as Ernesto Garilao correctly observed, the Arroyo Cabinet had the greatest number of pro-land reform personalities (e.g., Dinky Soliman, Ging Deles, Leonardo Montemayor, Karina Constantino-David, and Rigoberto Tiglao, to name a few) compared to previous CARP-era national administrations. These were the same land reform activists who had been extremely vocal critics of the land reform process under the Estrada-Morales tandem. Thus, hopes for a reinvigorated CARP were on the horizon, especially because land reform was one of the issues used against Estrada.

President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed a young member of congress as DAR secretary: Hernani Braganza, nephew of former president Ramos and a former ND activist during his university years (initially paired with the FFF’s Leonardo Montemayor at the DA, who was later replaced by banana magnate and anti-land reform elite Luis Lorenzo Jr.74). Braganza did not have a background in the peasant struggle and agrarian reform issues. He
very quickly broke up most of the pro-reform traditions and infrastructures instilled and installed by Garilao — which had, arguably, been maintained by Morales, at least to some extent. Braganza recruited lawyers with no prior knowledge of land reform or history of interactions with rural social movements to occupy the top DAR positions, due to his uninformed belief that land reform was purely the adjudication of land cases. He refused any intense and sustained interactions with autonomous rural social movement organizations. Instead, he imposed the idea that “partnership” between DAR and rural social movements must be “conflict-free” and its form limited to peaceful dialogues and “paper chasing.” He called in the elite police SWAT team to disperse demonstrating peasants in front of the DAR offices. Finally, he was out of his office most of the time.

During the Macapagal-Arroyo presidency, the significant erosion of reformist traditions and institutions within the DAR bureaucracy and its interface mechanisms with peasant groups and NGOs negatively impacted the local DAR bureaucracies. The most important impact would be the absence of any systematic interactive mechanism between the DAR, either at the national or local level, and peasant groups and NGOs. Moreover, internally, the arrogant leadership displayed by Braganza antagonized the rank-and-file employees of the DAR. This would later lead to the mainstream DAR employees’ union filing charges of corruption against Braganza (PAGC, 2002). While this would prove to be strategically important to the cause of land reform, especially because it would indeed lead to the ouster of Braganza, its immediate impact was widespread demoralization and demobilization of DAR officials and employees.

In many respects, Braganza was especially in the context of the politically contentious land reform process. Soon most of the autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs called for his ouster (UNORKA, 2001b, 2002; PARRDS, 2002). The DAR employees’ association (DAREA) itself formally filed graft and corruption charges against Braganza, and they too called for his ouster. The combined collective actions of UNORKA, PARRDS, and DAREA forced president Macapagal-Arroyo to take Braganza out of the DAR. After more than a year in office, and after causing serious harm to the reformist momentum in the land reform process, he was “ousted” — but given a graceful exit: He was reassigned as press secretary. President Arroyo was unwilling to antagonize the Ramos camp. In the end, Braganza’s average land redistribution accomplishment was less than that of the Morales DAR, in terms of both quantity and quality (PARC, 2002a). Unfortunately, during Braganza’s
period at the DAR, when the peasants were having great problems with him and calling for his ouster, the supposedly pro-land reform cabinet members who were extremely critical of the Estrada-Morales land reform performance were completely silent.

In February 2003, President Arroyo appointed a new DAR secretary: Roberto Pagdanganan, former governor of Bulacan (the northern province adjacent to Metro Manila). He had run and lost the past senatorial race under the president’s party. His appointment was made by Arroyo, despite the sustained lobby of peasant groups and NGOs for some names who were highly acceptable to them as DAR secretary (e.g., Gerry Bulatao and Wigberto Tañada). Most, if not all, peasant groups and NGOs called for Pagdanganan’s ouster, accusing him of orchestrating the widespread land use conversion and land reform evasions in Bulacan during his time as governor. While he did not make any dramatic changes to the DAR left him by his predecessor, Pagdanganan did restore to some extent the progressive tradition of interacting with autonomous rural social movements, at least during his first few months in office — the most probable motivation for this approach on his part likely being his senatorial ambition. However, months later and closer to the May 2004 national elections, Pagdanganan began to release decisions favouring big landlords in agrarian cases. Moreover, it was at this time that the government was able to decisively recover more than US$ 600 million from the Marcos loot, and by law the money was to be used to finance CARP. The various rural social movement organizations were demanding that at least 70 percent of the money be used to expropriate new private landholdings and only 30 percent dedicated to support services and development projects. The Pagdanganan DAR and president, Macapagal-Arroyo, had a different view: They wanted it 70 percent in favour of development projects. The social movement organizations suspected that this was a scheme in order to use the money for the forthcoming elections and thus protested strongly against it. Confronted by the anti-peasant decisions by Pagdanganan on several agrarian disputes and the fear that the administration was going to misuse the recovered Marcos wealth, peasant organizations, especially those directly affected by the negative decisions, were incensed. Led by UNORKA, a series of mobilizations were organized at the DAR central office. Pagdanganan, like Braganza, called in the SWAT team to violently disperse the protesting peasants. The UNORKA protest, however, escalated; it spread to DAR regional and provincial offices. Worried about the negative impact of this conflict on her election bid, President Macapagal-Arroyo removed Pagdanganan from office (but, like Braganza, he was simply transferred to another department). He was temporarily replaced
by DAR insider Cheli Ponce, who was then succeeded by two more secretaries within short intervals, before Secretary Nasser Pangandaman was appointed to the post in mid-2005. Reformism within the executive branch had almost completely disappeared since President Macapagal-Arroyo took power (see Rimban, 2005). Macapagal-Arroyo’s administration also ushered in an era of violence against political activists in general, and many of the victims of such violence were agrarian activists — creating a situation marked by what Franco describes as “lawlessness, murder and impunity”; one of the victims of this violence was UNORKA national Secretary-General Eric Cabanit who was assassinated in April 2006 (Franco, 2007; Franco and Borras, 2007).

In many ways, President Macapagal-Arroyo was like her predecessor, Joseph Estrada, when it came to land reform: Both were overconfident that they knew the program, while their actions and their statements betrayed their ignorance about the subject, if not their outright anti-reform bias. Estrada may have declared Danding Cojuangco to be the “godfather of land reform,” but it was Macapagal-Arroyo who perpetuated the special land reform deal with Danding Cojuangco. She also made uninformed policy statements, such as,

> [Leasehold] is the way to do land reform without having to look for all that money for land acquisition …. In [Estrada’s] time they never put any money in the budget for acquisition. I tried to improve by putting money. But the way our budget works, if you put something over nothing [previous year] that’s not much. But in this way we can go very strong in leasehold, at least in the coconut area.77

For one, in taking leasehold as a substitute for land redistribution she would be violating the CARP law. Neither did she seem to know that Estrada’s land redistribution output was greater than her administration’s — and that Estrada’s budget for land redistribution was higher than the annual budget of the Ramos and Macapagal-Arroyo administrations.78

5.4 PRO-REFORM STATE–SOCIETY ALLIANCES AND INTERACTIONS

While autonomous rural social movements from below and pro-reform state actors from above can each contribute toward the success of redistributive land reform, their combined forces offer more promise. This was elaborated in the theoretical chapter of this study. The aim here is to demonstrate how, why, and to what extent the pro-reform state–society alliance for redistributive land
reform has emerged and with what impact on CARP implementation. This provides an improved perspective on the case studies discussed in chapter 3 and chapter 4 and on the national overview of CARP outcomes presented in chapter 2.

The organized and politically coherent pro-reform alliance between state actors within the DAR and autonomous rural social movement groups started to gain more ground only after 1992. Before then, the mainstream DAR leaderships opted to work only with state co-opted peasant organizations and societal groups (although a minority group of DAR reformists led by Gerry Bulatao was already pursuing a pro-reform state–society alliance — but without much political and policy impact). Their politically conservative and technocratic approach treated peasant associations as important actors only insofar as they were administrative adjuncts to the state. The state defined the parameters of the agenda, the forms of action, and the nature of such “partnership.” It was an unequal relationship. Ordinary peasants who were engaged in agrarian disputes were forced to follow up their cases at the DAR offices by themselves, or they availed themselves of the services of individual “brokers,” who had some connections within the bureaucracy or used the channels provided by traditional, state co-opted peasant organizations, whose leaders, in turn, appealed to DAR offices using personal connections. This dominant conservative approach — the “paper chasing” method alluded to earlier — progressed at the mercy of DAR officials’ whims. The character of pre-1992 state–society interactions just described largely explains the low level of land redistribution accomplishment during that period. This approach was relegated to the periphery only after 1992, through a convergence of factors and actors. The emergence of a relatively coherent pro-reform state–society alliance for land reform largely accounts for the significant level of land redistribution accomplishment in the 1990s, as shown in chapter 2 and in chapter 4.

The interactions between autonomous rural social movement organizations and state reformists for land reform occurred in a variety of ways and used a number of different approaches, resulting in a variety of outcomes. This is illustrated by the three main types of pro-reform state–society interface: collective action with specific demands, reformist initiatives “from below,” and reformist initiatives “from above.”

Collective action with specific demands
The most common form of pro-reform state–society interface has been the collective actions launched by peasant organizations and their urban-based
allies addressed to the state. These collective actions have taken a variety of forms: from friendly to confrontational dialogues and pickets, from small to large street demonstrations, pitching camp in front of DAR offices to maintain political pressure on DAR officials, and small but dramatic actions designed to catch media attention, such as bringing live turtles to the DAR offices to protest the tortoise-like pace of the actions of DAR officials on land disputes. The padlocking of the gates of DAR offices to symbolize the ineptitude of the offices in resolving their cases was yet another form of collective action. These forms of action have been well calculated by peasant groups and their allies to apply maximum pressure on the DAR to act on their cases and to gain attention for their issue through the media, both nationally and internationally. In a pro-reform, symbiotic state–society relationship, such actions are meant to weaken the anti-reform state actors and to pressure them to give in to the demands of the autonomous rural social movement groups. However, they are so targeted as not to politically weaken the state reformists vis-à-vis the anti-reform forces within and outside the state. (Where there are no state reformists, the rural social movements’ actions are calculated to oust anti-reform officials, as in the cases of Hernani Braganza and Roberto Pagdanganan.) In short, these interactions are better seen as inherently conflict ridden and as recursive political bargaining processes between pro-reform state and societal actors.

Moreover, and on most occasions, the forms and conduct of these collective actions were designed so that they would be picked up by the media. For example, depending on the specific aim of the action, a day-long mobilization of 5,000 peasants in front of a regional DAR office may have less impact on the media than five peasants staging a hunger strike in front of DAR headquarters in Manila. In real life, the forms of action and their duration were calculated largely based on the available logistics of the peasants and their allies in the context of the aims of the mobilization. Transporting peasants to Manila is quite expensive. In the 1990s, hiring a “jeepney” that could accommodate twenty people from the provinces of Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog would have cost some PhP 2,500 (US$ 50) round-trip. Thus, to organize a 2,000-strong peasant mobilization in Manila from Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog would cost at least PhP 250,000 (US$ 5,000) for a single day, not including food and other expenses. A budget of a million pesos would be insufficient to mobilize 10,000 peasants to Manila for one day. And only a minuscule amount of this could be raised from among the peasants. So it can be seen that these kinds of mobilizations drain NGO finances quite rapidly. This issue has also become a permanent source of conflict between NGOs and funding agencies – that is, the question of diverting funds from their original and
official purposes. Hence, over time, the evolution of forms of collective action and approaches to organizing work has been greatly influenced by logistical considerations. This can be seen from a historical perspective:

During the Marcos dictatorship, the main agenda among ND peasant mobilizations was to expose and oppose the bankruptcy of agrarian and agricultural policies and protest against the massive human rights violations in the countryside. This type of agenda and the forms of collective action that came with it were well within the left wing tradition of political agitation-propaganda (“agit-prop”) mobilizations aimed at politically isolating the ruling classes and the elite faction that held state power. The demands therefore were framed within “motherhood” slogans like “genuine land reform!,” “dismantle feudalism!,” or “down with the US-Marcos dictatorship!” Most of these mobilizations were carried out in urban centres, such as Manila, Cebu, or Davao, for maximum media attention. These mobilizations were highly centralized in terms of coordination, agenda, and sites of actions. To reduce the costs of peasant mobilizations, the urban-based organizers usually recruited poor urban communities — students and workers from Manila (or other cities) — to join the peasant demonstrations in order to enlarge the size without too much additional expense. These mobilizations were funded not by the peasants or their local associations, but by their allies: either the national peasant federations they belonged to (such as the KMP), their NGO allies (such as the PEACE Foundation), or political movements (such as the ND movement). NGOs abroad supplied most of their funds, some of which were intended for these types of peasant actions, but most of which were not. Funds were in fact intended, or at least officially requested for and reported as, development projects, but they were re-channelled to these agit-prop actions. During the Marcos era, the NDs had political and organizational hegemony over rural social movements and important mass mobilizations. The KMP and its allies could raise millions of pesos and mobilize 10,000 peasants combined with contingents of the urban poor, workers, and students. The NDs enjoyed massive external funding from abroad during the Marcos era. Most foreign donors explicitly and implicitly tolerated the use of their funds for mass mobilizations in the context of the intense political campaign to oust the Marcos dictatorship.

When Marcos was ousted, mass mobilizations continued, but in a slightly different form. The period 1986–1989 witnessed the prioritization of agendas that were specifically and concretely related to peasant issues, especially during the debates over the framing of the Constitution (the KMP’s Tadeo was a member of the forty-eight-person Constitutional Commission) and in the
subsequent policymaking process for CARP (1987–1988). Moreover, the ND peasant movement introduced the combination of selective “land invasion/occupation” of landholdings that were politically controversial and used these politically controversial cases to challenge, embarrass, and politically isolate the government over the weaknesses of its land reform program. Such mobilizations were absolutely necessary and relatively effective. In fact, this type of mobilization was adopted by other non-ND social movement groups, such as the social-democrats. The CPAR mobilizations in 1987–1989 were similar in nature. The adoption of a constitutional provision on land reform and the passage of the CARP law to some degree reflected the extent and intensity of peasant mass mobilizations during this period.

In the latter 1980s, however, internal and external factors started to work against the continued practice of agit-prop mobilizations. Internally, the rural bases of the ND movement, including those in Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog (the traditional sources of peasant political mobilizations in Manila), were adversely affected by the “total war” policy launched by the Aquino administration against the communist insurgents. Most of the victims of the Aquino war were civilian peasants who were members of or sympathetic to the KMP and other ND organizations. It became increasingly difficult to launch big peasant-based mobilizations. Externally, and for various reasons, including the collapse of the Marcos dictatorship, many foreign donor organizations were no longer tolerant of spending large amounts of money on agit-prop campaigns. They became critical of the purely political projects of the ND organizations. Soon, they began to diversify their partners to include non-ND groups, a move that meant a corresponding decrease in the ND share of funding assistance, and a relative increase in the political capacity of non-ND rural social movement organizations and networks.

It was during this period that the NPS-CPP was tasked with devising ways to recover lost mass base and reinvigorate political mass mobilizations by the peasantry. By using some new approaches, and despite the internal and external constraints, politically and logistically, the ND peasant mass mobilizations again gathered momentum, but with a different character and form. However, few of these mobilizations focused on the land reform issue, since the DAR leaderships during this period were unwilling to engage with the autonomous organized peasantry and the NGO community. The nature and character of peasant-based mass mobilizations was altered to a significant degree after the ND splits in 1993, which coincided with the rise of the state reformists within the DAR. The subsequent reformist mobilizations continued to uphold the militant and confrontational stance of the ND political tradition, but the agenda, scale, target, and form were substantially revised.
After 1993, peasant-based collective actions for land reform launched by the ex-NDs (e.g., DKMP, then UNORKA, were marked by a number of changes: The main objective of the mobilizations was redefined from the conventional ND framework of purely agit-prop, “expose and oppose,” to “maximization” of opportunities available within CARP toward the successful redistribution of as many landholdings as possible to landless and land-poor peasants. Concretely, the shift was from “taking up land disputes to demonstrate that CARP cannot redistribute land” to “taking up land disputes to actually achieve redistributive reform.” This also meant simultaneous actions at the national level (or in urban/media centres) and at the local, estate-level, unlike the purely urban-located, media-directed orientation of the agit-prop campaigns. (This naturally influenced the later swing toward the polycentric type of a peasant movement among reformist rural social movement groups.) But these reformist agendas were largely confined to within the specific landholdings in which the mobilizing peasant organizations and their allies had actual organizing work or members. The main targets of these mobilizations were the various DAR offices, from local (municipal) all the way up to the national DAR headquarters.

The scale of peasant mobilizations in urban centres was greatly reduced compared to the 1980s in terms of the number of “warm bodies.” During the 1990s, it was rare to witness a peasant mobilization in Manila that exceeded 1,000 peasant participants. There are a number of reasons for this change. For one, the high cost of mobilization became unaffordable to most political movements and NGOs, whose external funding was generally reduced toward the end of the 1990s. In addition, the rules for fund use and management became stricter against re-channelling to uses other than those specified in the contracts (and project contracts seldom had a budget for political mobilizations). In some cases, this actually resulted in a positive development: Mobilizations were increasingly funded by the peasants themselves. But peasants were willing and able to finance part of their collective actions’ logistical requirements only if the agenda centred on, or included, their particular land claims. Many of the land disputes were from geographically remote places from where the transportation cost to Manila or other regional urban centres was extremely expensive. For example, to transport a jeep-load of twenty peasant land claimants from Bondoc Peninsula, Quezon, cost more than PhP 10,000 (US$ 200) not including food expenses. This meant bringing in only the key leaders of peasant organizations that had specific land claims. Finally, partly due to the changes in the nature of peasant claim-making, some of the autonomous peasant organizations that emerged after the late 1990s naturally developed
the polycentric political and organizational character mentioned above: local groups were responsible for the actions demanded at the local level, such as forcible occupation of an estate and mobilizations before the local and intermediate (municipal-provincial-regional) DAR offices. But the need to increase the power and extend the reach of political actions to the national (and even international) level, required horizontal and vertical linkages with other autonomous peasant groups and their allies. These types of peasant associations and mobilizations signified a qualitative departure from peasant organizations like the KMP, which remained fixated on an urban-located, nationally and internationally oriented, media-directed political agit-prop orientation requiring tightly centralized structures of organization, leadership, and coordination. Perhaps the UNORKA experience is the best example of the polycentric type of movement emerging in the Philippines.

The reduced capacity of peasant organizations and their allies to finance large-scale peasant-based mobilizations in urban centres, especially Manila, forced activists to develop what are called “small but dramatic” peasant actions, primarily to catch media attention. Examples of these are the aforementioned PAKISAMA and AR Now!’s bringing live turtles to the DAR central office to demonstrate how slowly the DAR was acting on their land cases, the Task Force Mapalad’s chaining and padlocking themselves to bulletin board posts within the DAR headquarters, ALDA-UFEARBAI’s paralysing the DAR regional office in Davao by dumping truckloads of bananas to block the main gates, and UNORKA’s forcible occupation of the office of the DAR secretary for three days and three nights. Peasants pitching camp in front of DAR offices for weeks, even months, was another technique in the repertoire of collective actions at the national level. Peasant organizations, or rather, their NGO allies, thus increasingly invested in media work to increase the impact of their collective actions. However, the media is a private entity wherein elite influence is well entrenched; it is therefore at best a vacillating ally of the peasants in their struggle for land reform. (This is, for example, the situation confronting UFEARBAI in Davao.) Its corps of reporters is not immune to ideological biases that spill over to the slant they take in their newspaper reports.

This evolving repertoire of peasant collective actions beyond their localities differently impacted the various DAR officials, employees, and leaderships. The most tolerant of all DAR leaderships to these kinds of actions was the Garilao administration, although it was, internally, deeply angered by some of the actions, specifically the tambak saging (banana dumping) by farm workers
in Davao and the padlocking of DAR offices. In striking contrast to the Garilao DAR were the Braganza and Pagdanganan DARs, which brought in heavily armed SWAT teams to disperse peasant actions.

But more generally, the DAR was able to reorient itself to the evolving patterns of peasant-based collective actions. Even before a peasant delegation arrived, research and preparation was already being done at the national and regional DAR, studying the particular cases pursued by the peasant delegation, bringing the key local DAR officials to the central and regional offices for briefings, coordinating with other government agencies when necessary, and, at times, preparing formal decisions on cases even before the peasant action occurred. In many cases, “backdoor” clarification between DAR officials and NGO supporters of the peasants was carried out on the issues. In the actual interface between peasants and DAR officials, the former usually took a confrontational stance: banging tables and shouting at the officials. For the peasants, these were rare opportunities to speak aloud and air their pent-up frustration and feelings of social exclusion, oppression, and suffering. To some DAR officials, though, these actions seemed unnecessary and disrespectful. When DAR officials said they would decide on a case within three days, the peasants would ask them to put it in writing and affix their signatures to their promises. Then the peasants would inform the DAR officials that they would await the decision in a makeshift camp in front of the office. This put pressure on the DAR officials to deliver and brought the peasants nearer to their objective of obtaining favourable decisions. Flooded with such encounters, the Garilao DAR in fact organized a separate office called “Special Concerns Staff” (SCS) that handled the administrative requirements of this type of interface. The DAR also devised a system to track down cases put forward by autonomous peasant groups and NGOs. It coined the term “flash-point case” to pertain to specific land cases that had the potential for violence to erupt between the competing actors; all concerned offices within the DAR bureaucracy, from local to national, were ordered to prioritize resolution of such cases.

This type of collective action (“specific case” mobilizations) by peasant organizations and their allies had very concrete advantages. For one, it forced interaction with DAR officials, who preferred avoiding such face-to-face meetings, and so brought concrete legal cases to the attention of officials who had the power, or at least the obligation, to resolve them. Mobilizations around particular cases provided systematic tracking of the course that the case had taken and sustained the pressure on DAR officials to find a resolution. Peasants and peasant leaders who were directly affected by a particular case
were usually represented in these mobilizations, if they did not take the actual lead role. For example, it was impressive to see that UNORKA maintained a complete tracking, in computerized and written forms, of the progress (or not) of each case of the 519 land disputes its member organizations had filed before the government for resolution, affecting some 200,000 hectares and involving 90,000 peasant households, or about a half million people. Each case had its own systematically monitored history. The case tracking system included the name and location of the landholding, land area, crops, tenancy relations, profiles of claimants involved, type of land acquisition and distribution, counter-actions of the landlord, types of human rights violations, the actual status of the case, what needed to be done politically, legally, and organizationally, the set of demands addressed to the DAR, and the status of the latest confrontation with the DAR (UNORKA, 2001a). Hence, the interface between peasant groups and state officials revolved around concrete and specific but land case-oriented issues. The constant tracking of and political pressure applied with regard to these specific land cases pushed redistributive land reform, as demonstrated in chapter 4, nearer to reality. The proliferation of such actions largely accounted for the relative rise in the quantity of successfully resolved land cases, albeit limited in scale as shown in chapters 2, 3, and 4. This includes the case of the sugar cane sector-dominated Negros Occidental province and the subsequent mobilizations by UNORKA and the Task Force Mapalad (TFM) group.

However, from a broader and longer perspective, there are weaknesses in this kind of peasant collective action, which partly explains the character and extent of CARP’s land redistribution outcomes over time. The biggest weakness is perhaps that such actions tend to focus only on the particular cases in which the said peasant organizations and their allies have direct involvement (organizing, mobilizing, and providing legal assistance). While it is perfectly understandable that local peasant groups directly affected by specific disputes focus on the resolution of their own cases, there is a great danger that national peasant organizations will lose sight of the strategic and broad perspective: the issue of land redistribution affecting the landless and land-poor peasants more generally.

This is worrisome because the ranks of autonomous peasant organizations can actually and organizationally represent only a fraction of the entire landless and land-poor peasants in the country. This also holds true for NGOs that tend to work solely on the agrarian disputes in their direct area of operations. If these organizations fail to address peasant issues outside the circle of their partner peasant groups — for example, through advocating concrete reforms in policies and implementation mechanisms, they may end up victorious in some
cases, but against a larger society-wide backdrop of unresolved land questions. Unfortunately, the ranks of NGOs engaged in systematic and rigorous policy advocacy on land reform have been thin and weak, geographically uneven, and sometimes politically inconsistent and incoherent. Moreover, the specific, estate-by-estate approach has necessarily restricted (perhaps most evidently in the Davao plantation belt and the Negros Occidental sugar cane sector), on many occasions, the pro-reform societal forces within the limited confines of the agenda set by the state. For example, save for intermittent and superficial questions raised about the “missing” land redistribution scope in CARP, no peasant organization or NGO has actually systematically pursued the issue of “missing landholdings,” the scale of which is enormous, as demonstrated in chapter 3. Furthermore, most of the efforts of the autonomous peasant organizations and their allies in the struggle for land reform have focused on private landholdings, effectively endorsing the mistaken notion that there is no real redistributive land reform on public lands, either lands under the DAR or under the DENR. Thus, it is rare to find organized, systematic, and sustained claim-making initiatives by rural social movements in and around these types of land, except perhaps the initiatives by the PEACE network of NGOs and peasant organizations.

In addition, while it is encouraging to see the autonomous rural social movement organizations sustain their attention on the DAR bureaucracy, from a broader perspective these actions have actually been overly DAR-centred. Recall that at least twenty different state agencies, large and small, are directly or indirectly involved in land reform. These are related to land titles (the Registry of Deeds, ROD), approval of land use conversion (the DA, local government units, the National Housing Regulatory Board, and the National Irrigation Authority), land valuation or amortization payments (the LBP), surveying (the DENR), legal appeals (the Office of the President, the Supreme Court, and the DAR Adjudication Board), and so on. Nonetheless, peasant actions have tended to be DAR centred: Legal cases at the Supreme Court provoke demonstrations at the DAR; delays in surveys provoke protests at the DAR; delays in land valuation processes and subsequent delays in land redistribution provoke rallies at the DAR; and so on. While the DAR is the lead agency in CARP implementation and so it is justifiable for DAR to receive the brunt of peasant collective action, such an approach, on most occasions, may not be the most efficient way of using the limited (logistical and political) resources of peasant groups and their allies. At times, such mistargeted actions have unnecessarily drained pro-reform allies within the DAR of their energy and tolerance for mobilizations from below. It has also enabled other state
agencies, and the anti-reform forces therein, to go about their business free from the pressure of intense rural social movement claim-making initiatives. And it is hardly the case that a cluster of state reformists will emerge in any state agency on their own, without being provoked by sustained engagement with autonomous societal actors. Latent allies and adversaries of redistributive land reform remain latent unless directly provoked by mass mobilizations “from below” — at least this has largely been the experience with most Philippine local state agencies, especially the DAR.

In short, the repertoire of peasant collective actions beyond their localities has jumped from one extreme to another: from the purely agit-prop, “expose and oppose” type of action spearheaded by the ND rural social movement in the 1980s (and the ND continues to promote this approach up to the time of this writing) to the specific estate-by-estate case resolution type. This historical development of peasant movements and their patterns of mass mobilizations has largely accounted for the types of CARP outcomes over time. However, the weaknesses of these types of collective actions have been spotted by some groups both within the ranks of the rural social movements and by state reformists within the DAR. Certain adjustments have been introduced in response, although still with relatively limited impact. These adjustments, discussed below, have aimed to compensate for the gaps in the approach discussed above.

Reformist initiatives “from below”
This second type of pro-reform state–society interface is an extension of the first type, but is an attempt to systematize the scope and extend its impact to a broader terrain. While it pertains to initiatives originally conceived and proposed by rural social movement organizations, in this type of interaction, state reformists have been drawn in. While this second type involves local and national peasant organizations, the NGOs take a more active role in the actual agenda setting, policy analysis, and actions, as compared to the first type, which comprises mainly peasant-based actions. In this second type, resolution of specific cases remains a major agenda item, but due attention is given to three other issues: improving and systematizing implementation mechanisms to speed up and broaden the scope of land redistribution, pushing for policy reforms, and, to some extent, actually mapping possible additional target landholdings. Thus, this second type of approach is more programmatic than the first, although its form is “less dramatic” and so the national media and other analysts do not notice or give much value to it; others make the crude conclusion that such state–society interface means co-optation and uncritical collaboration.
In March 1997, 190 DAR officials and NGO peasant social group community organizers and leaders participated in the second national DAR-NGO-peasant organization workshop (the first was in 1996) on how to “fast-track” CARP implementation. The workshop was convened by “National Task Force 24,” an initiative of the PEACE Foundation to hasten CARP implementation in twenty-four provinces identified as areas where there were significant and highly contested large landholdings. The political initiative also aspired to “defend CARPed lands threatened by land use conversions and other anti-agrarian reform moves.” The conference vowed to “promote productivity and income improvement in tenancy-free communities” and to push for a positive policy environment for a more just and meaningful agrarian reform and rural development.”

This workshop, which drew in the DAR, is a good example of the second type of state–society interface. It is necessary to elaborate:

In 1994, the PEACE Foundation and its network of local, autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs initiated a dialogue with the DAR regarding specific landholdings scheduled for expropriation in the twenty-four provinces, where its network had direct operations. Instead of dealing separately and on individual basis to resolve each case, PEACE proposed that a more systematic joint PEACE-DAR team be formed to resolve the cases and work out operational mechanisms for implementation. The workshop formed a working committee called “Task Force 24,” whose main objective was to fast-track land acquisition and distribution in the said provinces.

Thereafter, TF-24 focused on the twenty-four provinces where the positive interaction between state reformists within the DAR and peasants organizations and NGOs were most needed, given the potentially and actually strong landlord resistance to reform. This committee facilitated collective efforts among the state and societal pro-reform forces to identify major landholdings or ongoing local land disputes, and joint strategizing on how to defeat the landlords’ resistance in order to expedite expropriation and distribution of the land. Distinct roles for each of the involved parties were agreed upon mutually. The NGOs and peasant organizations’ main responsibilities were organizing the potential peasant beneficiaries, especially on the contentious issue of beneficiary inclusion-exclusion; carrying out mass mobilizations locally, regionally, and nationally and even mobilizing support internationally; and identifying the local DAR officials they wanted removed from office or a particular position. Meanwhile, the DAR’s responsibilities were preparing legal documents and drafting legal decisions that were then brought back to the NGOs and peasant organizations for feedback before finalization; coordinating with other state agencies; checking and preventing
possible violence from landlords; and removing from office or position local DAR officials about whom the NGOs and peasant organizations had filed complaints. These joint plans usually had set deadlines.

The dynamic and oftentimes conflict-ridden interaction between local DAR officials and local NGOs and peasant organizations was mediated by national-level DAR officials and NGOs. Many pro-reform societal organizations found that in this type of arrangement even those local DAR officials who had a strong tendency to be “fence-sitters,” rent-seekers, or outright opponents to land reform were partly neutralized or even converted to reformism, since they knew that the top DAR leadership valued the joint state-society effort. As one veteran activist said, “When the local officials know that your organization has connections with their higher officials, they respect you and pay attention to your demands. But when they know that you have no contacts at the top, most won’t even give you the minimum attention, let alone respect.”

The joint initiative proved relatively effective in hastening the process of land reform implementation. Later, the coverage of this joint committee expanded to thirty-two provinces (and the committee was renamed Task Force 32) and a major national rural social movement coalition, PARRDS, joined. Still later, the number of NGO and peasant organization participants expanded to include the social-democratic network AR Now! The Task Force’s area of operation also expanded, to forty provinces. The campaign was renamed “Project 40 Now!” It became the main mechanism under the Garilao DAR through which peasant groups and NGOs interfaced with the reformist officials of the DAR in a systematic and programmatic way (although the first type of pro-reform state-society interface discussed above continued in parallel). This interface mechanism was also replicated at the lower levels of the provinces, where it became known as ProCARRD (Provincial Consultation/Campaign for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development) and at the municipal level (MuCARRD or Municipal Consultation/Campaign for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development).

The regions that witnessed widespread and sustained state-society interface around specific land redistribution-focused initiatives and within the tradition of TF-24, TF-32, and Project 40 Now! were regions 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11. Other regions had experienced this type of state-society interaction, but to a far lesser extent and with less frequency than the regions cited here. But again, these pro-reform state-society interactions were highly uneven and varied between and within these regions.

While Task Force 24 and, later, Project 40 Now!, focused on land redistribution, another initiative was ongoing: TriPARRD, the Tripartite
Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. TriPARRD was a generously funded project relying on the tripartite partnership between government, NGOs, and peasant organizations. It focused on “softer” landholdings and on making these farms productive through development projects. It started early in the Garilao administration and was conceptualized and implemented by the DAR, PhilDHRRA, and PAKISAMA (see Liamzon, 1996). TriPARRD was virtually stopped, however, toward the end of the Garilao administration, due to its less than successful outcomes. TriPARRD had been carried out in a few pilot municipalities in a few regions, notably, regions 5, 6, and 10.

Project 40 Now! was not maintained during this period, due to divisions within the rural social movement groups with regard to terms of engagement with the Morales DAR. During the Morales period, the relatively broad and systematic interface mechanism was “Task Force Fast-Track,” which involved most of the ex-ND and PopDem groups in pushing for land redistribution nationwide. Other NGOs and peasant organizations, however, opted to boycott this initiative. Despite the boycott, the short-lived TF Fast-Track carried out relatively comprehensive work, especially in terms of locating “operational bottlenecks” in the land acquisition and redistribution process. It made sensible recommendations on how to improve the operational mechanisms for quick and decisive expropriation actions. Unfortunately, however, TF Fast-Track’s recommendations, which were finalized in December 2000, would not be transformed into actual practice, since Morales would be ousted from office the following month.

The formal and systematic state–society interface tradition of Project 40 Now! and even TF Fast-Track were completely dismantled during the Braganza DAR and after. Instead, Secretary Braganza insisted that what the DAR needed were lawyers to resolve pending cases and the promotion of voluntary land transfers (VLT) to avoid more legal cases. In general, President Macapagal-Arroyo supported Braganza in his thoughts about how to move ahead with CARP, although the sustained peasant protest against him eventually forced the president to remove him from his position in the DAR. Braganza’s successor, Roberto Pagdanganan, delivered similar performance and met a similar fate: being ousted from office by the force of peasant protest and mobilization.

In short, the reformist initiatives “from below” just described were an attempt to complement the more peasant-led and less programmatic collective actions, by incorporating policy-oriented and operational issues in the interface with the DAR. Value-added gains were made in this complementary effort.
However, many of the gaps left by the peasant-led collective actions were not fully covered by the complementary initiative operated mainly by NGOs. For example, while the agenda included issues like systematic operational mechanisms and other policy reforms, the bulk of efforts exerted remained limited to the pending cases put forward by autonomous peasant organizations and NGOs. The initiative failed to broaden its scope to cover, for instance, agendas that the state refused to table, such as a systematic accounting of the “missing lands” from the CARP scope. This interface mechanism also failed to realize the importance of public lands under the DAR and DENR jurisdictions. Moreover, the same interface mechanism has also at times resulted in a tendency among some NGO leaders to self-appoint themselves as “negotiators” or “brokers” between the government and local peasant associations, which is not helpful in the development of the organizational autonomy and capacity of peasant groups. Overall, however, like the first approach of peasant-led collective actions, the second type, with both its strengths and its weaknesses, contributed to shaping the nature, character, and extent of CARP land redistribution outcomes over time. The third and last type of interface mechanism between pro-reform state and societal forces complements the first two, but, in practice, will prove unable to substantially fill the still-existing gaps.

Reformist initiatives “from above”
State actors do not simply react to pressures from societal actors. State reformists, on their own, conceive and instigate initiatives that later pull in societal actors. The first major and mainstay initiative of the DAR that slowly drew in the active participation of NGOs and peasant organizations was the Agrarian Reform Community (ARC) development program launched in 1993. An ARC was defined as a barangay or a cluster of contiguous barangays where a critical mass of farmers and farm workers were awaiting the full implementation of agrarian reform. “These farmers and farm workers will anchor the integrated development of the areas” (DAR-BARBD, 2000: 18). By 2000, the DAR was able to launch some 1,000 ARCs nationwide, involving about a million hectares of (supposedly) “land reformed” landholdings.

Earlier, most NGOs and peasant organizations had been critical of and inactive in the ARC development program, but over time they slowly began to be drawn into it. This interface between pro-reform forces within the state and in society has been relatively different from the land dispute-centred political dynamics of land reform. In an ARC project, the conflict is primarily about the control over the nature, pace, extent, and direction of development projects, such as training and education programs for micro-credit and “social
preparation” programs for infrastructure projects like road construction. In an ARC development project, the main challenge for state and non-state reform actors revolves around the issue of making the reform sector socioeconomically productive and viable, an undertaking that requires capacity and skills different from those at the land reform stage.

The ARC strategy, which was the “brainchild” of Garilao, contributed to some extent to the cause of agrarian reform in the country. This is seen in at least three ways: First, the ARC concept was partly responsible for reinvigorating the interest of foreign donors in CARP. Within four years, through the ARC projects, the Garilao DAR had mobilized close to a billion dollars in foreign development assistance. Second, the ARC concept partly shielded CARP from the attacks of the anti-land reform forces that contended that lands awarded to peasants became unproductive. Whatever the limitations and drawbacks of the ARC concept, strategy, and actual implementation, the Garilao DAR was able to produce empirical evidence that agrarian reform actually works, especially when systematic support services are delivered to the reform sector. The Garilao DAR used the ARC program in its perennial arguments with members of congress during annual budget deliberations. In addition, with the serious and renewed interest of the foreign donor community, other anti-CARP state actors hesitated to attack the program, careful not to antagonize the international donors. Finally, overall the ARC strategy can be seen as a “training ground” for pro-reform forces within the state and in society for capacity-building and skills development related to rural development (see Lourie, 2001). For these reasons, subsequent administrations at the DAR decided to continue the ARC strategy and programs.

Nevertheless, in general, autonomous rural social movement groups have remained critical of the ARC concept, strategy, and outcomes. Among the issues they raise is the exclusionary character of the ARC strategy, since only a fraction of land reform beneficiaries are actually covered by the program. Many have realized, however, that defaulting on post-land reform development undertakings may only give ammunition to those looking for ways to edge land reform off of the state policy agenda. Hence, despite actual differences of opinion on rural development strategies, increasingly, societal actors have begun interfacing with the DAR officials in ARC developments.

Eventually, although uneven, integration of autonomous rural social movement groups in the ARC program has resulted in at least two unexpected outcomes: On the one hand, and on a positive note, NGOs have discovered that many of the communities that were declared as ARCs in fact have pending land redistribution-related issues. Thus, while these communities were on record as having no pending issues about land tenure, NGO activists
have discovered otherwise. Some of these NGOs have therefore ended up not only doing development projects but also assisting peasants to consummate their land reform struggles. Such situations cut across ARC development levels, from those that are top rated to those with lacklustre performance in development. The three sub-national comparative studies done by Franco and her colleagues (namely, the “35 weakest ARC organizations,” 1999c; “top ARCs,” 1998a; and “ARC and rural democratization,” 2000) are revealing: Most formally declared ARCs in fact have substantial unresolved land disputes, so that many of those who benefit from the state development support are not the peasant beneficiaries but the local elite, and many of the existing ARCs do not necessarily reflect the interests of the previously landless and land-poor segments of the communities.

On the other hand, many NGOs were attracted to the ARC programs primarily because these projects offered generous funds. One of the most significant effects of many NGOs jumping onto the ARC bandwagon was, arguably, a relative drain of activist NGOs and individuals working on the land redistribution struggle. The latter has become increasingly unattractive to local and foreign NGOs, because it is politically contentious, victorious outcomes are uncertain and unpredictable, and it involves project components that are not easily funded (e.g., political mobilizations and organizing expenses). By the late 1990s, few international NGOs and development agencies were providing substantial support for land redistribution campaigns. Rather, “good governance, local governance” and micro-finance within and outside ARCs became favourites, despite the largely unresolved land question in the country. The DAR, many NGOs (national and international), and bilateral and multilateral agencies justify these choices, contending that after “widespread” land transfers, the focus of development work now must be on farm development. While in theory such contentions do not negate the need to continue working on land redistribution, actual funding and projects have largely ceased flowing to the politically contentious land redistribution component of CARP. Interestingly, and unfortunately, this kind of argument is the same as that used by anti–land reform elites within and outside government. The agriculture secretary under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, the banana magnate Luis Lorenzo Jr. for example, declared,

Additional land acquisition under the land reform program should be put on hold until the original owners have been properly and fairly paid, and until the land reform beneficiaries have been provided with all the tools (including training and market access). This is to ensure the farmers can properly nurture the land to produce goods that will help them secure a better life.
5.5 CONFRONTATION WITH ANTI-REFORM COALITIONS

While the existence of pro-reform state–society alliances increases the possibility of successful implementation of land reform policy, such alliances do not guarantee automatic positive outcomes. This is because most anti-reform manoeuvres are also marked by a coalition between state and societal actors. The earlier theoretical discussion in this study explained this point in detail. This section demonstrates how and why confrontation with anti-reform coalitions does not always result in positive outcomes. The actual balance of power between the contending sets of actors largely determines the outcomes of struggles, whether the contestations relate to a specific case or are policy-related. A few empirical examples, both case-related and policy-related, are discussed below.

Case-related examples
A good example of a pro-reform state–society coalition that pushed for the expropriation of a specific landholding but was overpowered by an anti-reform alliance was the NDC land in Langkaan, Dasmariñas, Cavite, in 1990. The case did not even involve a private landlord; rather, the 230 hectares of farmland was owned by the governmental NDC. Elites within the Aquino Cabinet wanted the land converted to industrial-commercial uses tied in with a Japanese company, but it was officially up for redistribution under CARP. DAR Secretary Abad sided with the Langkaan peasants, and was backed by a broad national coalition of peasant organizations, the Peasants’ Forum (CPAR + FFF + Sanduguan). The “pro–private capital accumulation” elite within the Aquino Cabinet was led by Jose Concepcion and supported by the provincial elite led by Cavite Governor Juanito Remulla and the Japanese giant company Marubeni. Together, they actively blocked the redistribution of the NDC land. Pro-reform forces lost the case in the sense that this conflict was largely used by anti-reform activists within the Congress to refuse to confirm Abad’s appointment as DAR secretary. Abad resigned in April, after four months in office; the peasants failed to secure ownership and control of the land.

Similarly, toward the late 1990s, the case of Mapalad involving the landholding of the politically well-connected Quisumbing family in Bukidnon (Region 10, Mindanao) witnessed a top-level pro-reform state–society coalition push for the redistribution of the land. It was among the agrarian reform disputes in CARP’s history that received the widest media coverage nationally and internationally, especially because of the dramatic hunger strike launched
by the protesting peasants. But the Quisumbings proved too influential, and the regional elite and government bureaucrats stood solidly behind the landlord. The pro-reform forces eventually lost the case (see Gatmaytan, 2000; Villarin, 1999; Quitoriano, 2000).

Other cases that suffered similar fates were some of those described in chapter 3. However, there are also cases where successful expropriation was carried out, despite a strong anti-reform coalition, as shown by the cases in chapter 4. An example in this latter category was the Reyes estate case in Catulin, Buenavista, Quezon. The 174-hectare coconut farm was owned by the largest landlord in Bondoc Peninsula, Quezon (Domingo Reyes). The DAR placed it under compulsory acquisition. The landlord opposed the expropriation and expelled the peasants from the farm. A series of attempts to put the peasants in possession of the land failed due to the escalating and increasingly violent opposition of the landlord. The landlord was extremely powerful and well connected nationally and controlled the local police. The Morales DAR, in coordination with NGOs, peasant organizations, and the national media, organized a national-level inter-agency team (including the DENR, the Department of Justice, the national police, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and the Office of the President). It brought in a company-sized military and police contingent, which rolled through the town in military tanks, helicopters, and armed personnel carriers, forcibly putting the land in the peasants’ actual possession. This was a widely publicized triumph for land reform against a powerful landlord (Franco, forthcoming).

Policy-related examples
The pro-reform state–society coalitions, despite their joint mobilizations, have lost a number of policy-related cases. One example was the eventual exclusion of fishponds from CARP coverage through a congressional initiative toward the mid-1990s. The pro-reform coalition (MORE-AR, Movement to Oppose More Exemptions from Agrarian Reform) mounted a series of mobilizations to block the initiative to exclude farms that are less dependent on land, such as fishponds, salt beds, and poultry farms. Yet, despite sustained mobilizations, the anti-reform coalition proved too strong. The law further diluting CARP was passed and enacted — although, partly in response to the opposition to it, some labour-oriented reforms were included such as mandatory production and profit sharing schemes on such farms.

The pro-reform coalition also lost in courts a number of important legal cases that may have policy-related implications for CARP, such as the Mapalad case regarding the power of local government units to reclassify land use (see,
e.g., Gatmaytan, 2000). Moreover, the perennial problem of CARP budget slashing by Congress constitutes an important defeat for pro-reform forces.

However, there are also cases where the pro-reform alliance was able to secure important victories, such as the CARP extension law in early 1998 and the campaign against the World Bank’s market-led agrarian reform. These two cases deserve further elaboration.

The original CARP law (RA 6657) explicitly directed the government to finish the land redistribution component of CARP within ten years, or by June 1998. Toward the end of 1997, there was much legal and political uncertainty: CARP was only halfway through its land redistribution implementation, but the legal timetable was to expire the following year. Anti-reform members of Congress were already preparing to use the expiration date to move toward the decisive demise of the CARP law. This was the opportunity that most landlords had been awaiting to have their landholdings excluded from expropriation due to the legal technicality of CARP’s expired timetable. A new law, which would have to be approved by the landlord-dominated Congress, was required if CARP’s legal existence was to be extended and fresh funds were to be allocated, because the original PhP 50 billion budget for 1988–1998 was already fully spent. The Garilao DAR and the broad rural social movement organizations held a series of consultations and strategy sessions on how to pass a new law. There was a major problem: The congressional session was due to end by February 1998, national elections (congressional and presidential) would be held in May, and the next congressional session would resume only in July and with a new (and as yet unknown) representation composition. The political dynamics were uncertain, but the pro-reform forces turned the seemingly negative constellation of factors into a positive one.

The DAR leadership worked on House Speaker Jose de Venecia, to convince him of the importance of passing a law on CARP extension and additional funding. De Venecia, a close ally of President Ramos, was running for president (against, among others, Joseph Estrada). DAR Secretary Garilao convinced him that the passage of a CARP extension law would boost his chances of election victory, with millions of votes coming from the peasantry. At the time, De Venecia was trailing behind Estrada in the polls. Meanwhile, autonomous rural social movement organizations were working closely with progressive members of congress (specifically with Wigberto Tañada and Edcel Lagman) to help pass the law.

Convinced of the electoral value of a CARP extension law, De Venecia prepared the congressional stage to do an almost impossible thing: sponsor a bill, rush it through different levels of formal committee and plenary deliberations, ensure that it passed through the bicameral committee (Upper
and Lower Houses of Congress), and have it signed into law by President Ramos, all within a span of a few days.

The actual political process on the congressional floor and lobby was almost comic, but the outcome carried a profound and far-reaching policy implication: the continuity of CARP beyond June 1998. Congress approved the final bill on a day when there was not even a quorum, as most congress members were absent from the sessions, including the most anti-land reform representatives such as John Osmeña, busy as they were preparing for electoral campaigns in their districts. President Ramos signed into law RA 8532 on 23 February 1998, granting a ten-year extension to land redistribution and appropriating another PhP 50 billion budget (the same amount as for the 1988–1998 period).

Meanwhile, the World Bank made its first attempt to recruit government officials to embrace its market-led agrarian reform (MLAR) program in 1996, insinuating that the Philippine government must halt CARP’s land distribution implementation, especially in the 5–24 hectare land size category, because of its distorting the land market. Instead, the World Bank counselled, the country should adopt the MLAR’s “willing seller–willing buyer” approach. The DAR under Ernesto Garilao flatly rejected the World Bank’s proposal and gave the NGO community a copy of the World Bank’s confidential document regarding MLAR in the Philippines. Subsequent noisy public protest from agrarian reform activist circles led by PARRDS drove World Bank officials hastily away from the Philippine CARP. They returned, however, three years later, with renewed vigour and persistence.

In early 1999, the World Bank officials came to the Philippines to convince the then new DAR leadership to at least support a small pilot MLAR project (see Franco, 1999d, 1999e; Reyes, 1999). For different reasons, including the hope for new loans amidst a creeping lack of public funds, the DAR leadership expressed interest in exploring the possibilities of MLAR as a complementary approach to existing CARP schemes. The World Bank, however, later informed the DAR that no fresh funds would be allocated for the MLAR project; instead the existing World Bank–supported infrastructure project for CARP’s ARC program would be diverted to finance the MLAR project. Tensions between the DAR and World Bank officials ensued. Finally, they agreed that a much smaller project — a feasibility study — would be carried out instead. Again, throughout 1999 and after, NGOs and peasant movements from the broad political spectrum rejected the MLAR program and any pilot program for it (see, e.g., UNORKA, 2000b). By 2003, the DAR and the World Bank moved on to upgrade the feasibility study into a small pilot program in ten provinces, as explained in chapter 3 — amidst protests from the rural social movement organizations.
Summarizing the examples
In short, pro-reform actions by state actors and societal organizations have been launched as joint actions and as separate but parallel initiatives. While the pro-reform state–societal coalition seems the most promising strategy to secure real redistributive reform gains, it does not guarantee automatic, full, and permanent victory, whether in a specific land dispute or in a policy-oriented struggle. As the discussion above illustrates, the political dynamics that determine the actual balance of power between various competing actors are constantly shifting. The pre-existing structural and institutional settings are an important context and object of these state–society contestations. These, in turn, shape and reshape the degree, extent, and forms of their interactions, pro-reform or otherwise. The reflections of Ernesto Garilao (1999: xix–xxi), former DAR secretary, about his experience in the pro-reform coalition more or less capture the essential points put forward so far in this chapter:

The civil society partners of the DAR were given all the opportunities to penetrate the state agrarian reform apparatus, get into alliances with national and local DAR bureaucrats, and use legal and extralegal political action to assert and seek favourable resolution of issues, concerns and interests …. Not all the agrarian reform partners fully utilized this opening. But PARRDS and the PEACE Foundation saw this democratic opening and maximized [their] gains …. When reforms do not move as fast, it is easy to accuse government of lacking political will and sincerity, and other pejorative terms in the civil society cookbook. In many cases, reforms do not move fast because social pressure from the constituency is weak. Many have the mistaken notion that press releases and letters to the editor constitute sufficient social pressure …. [P]easant social mobilizations complemented by friendly media support is a more effective combination. State reforms are rarely won by state reformists alone. They are won … when the alliance between autonomous peasant organizations and state reformists is much stronger than whatever coalition of the anti-reformists within and outside government can mount.

5.6 STATE–SOCIETY INTERACTIONS AND SPATIAL VARIATIONS IN POLICY OUTCOMES

The outcomes of land redistribution in the country have been varied and uneven temporally and spatially. The main cause of such variations is not the mere presence or absence of social movement groups, nor is it the mere presence or absence of pro-reform state actors, in a given place and time.
Rather, it is the nature and character of state–society interactions that largely shape the variegated outcomes through time and across geographic spaces. It is relevant to briefly explain:

Table 5.2 offers a comparative tabulation of regional land reform outcomes, viewing it against the degree of presence and influence of rural social movements and pro-reform state–society interactions. The last column in the table shows the extent of anti-reform outcomes as well, for instance, VLT practices, questionable land distribution scope deductions, and so on. The data and information used in this table have been, to varying extents, discussed and explained in chapters 2–4. Some further clarification about the data and information is, however, necessary. The basis for the land redistribution output estimate used here is not simply the official data; rather it is the official land reform data scrutinized through the analytic lens presented in this study, that is, what is and what is not truly redistributive reform. Hence, a region might have very high land redistribution accomplishment, except for the fact that VLT practices and questionable land distribution scope deduction were equally high; and so, the real picture is not as rosy as the official claims would have us believe. Moreover, the data and information for rural social movements and state–society interactions also build on the author’s more than two decades of direct participant-observation of these political processes, although this has been reinforced by the interviews with key actors carried out for this study. Finally, the classifications of “low,” “medium,” and “high” (and sometimes some combination of these) are approximations; certainly regions that are both classified as “low” (e.g., Ilocos and Cagayan) may still have significant variations between them.

Some relevant insights can be deduced from table 5.2. First, at the lowest end of the table in terms of land reform outcome and reformist actors and political process is ARMM. In this region, there are no significant autonomous rural social movements pushing for land reform, nor are there pro-reform state actors working for this reform. The result is the low level of land reform output, amidst a high degree of questionable transactions and outcomes, such as fake land titles sold to the DAR. Second, in contrast, the best (in relative terms of course) region so far is Central Luzon — on “average” performance, that is. It is to be recalled that this region has been the site of cycles of land claim–making protest actions by peasants during much of the past century. The first and second observations offer a range of interesting insights: On the one hand, the ARMM is not host to any significant modern plantations for exports. In fact for the most part, its agriculture is marked by (sub)subsistence farming; and yet, land reform there was extremely difficult due to the absence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Land redistribution output</th>
<th>Degree of presence and influence of rural social movements engaged in CARP implementation</th>
<th>Degree of presence and influence of pro-reform state–society interaction</th>
<th>Extent of anti-reform outcomes (VLT, questionable public lands, land distribution scope deduction, and so on)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cordillera (CAR)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 – Ilocos</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Cagayan</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Central Luzon</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-A – CALABARZON</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-B – MIMAROPA</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 – Bicol</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – Western Visayas</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – Central Visayas</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 – Eastern Visayas</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 – Western Mindanao</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – Northern Mindanao</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 – Southern Mindanao</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – Central Mindanao</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – Northeastern Mindanao</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM – Muslim Mindanao</td>
<td>Low-Low</td>
<td>Low-Low</td>
<td>Low-Low</td>
<td>High-High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of social movements and reform-oriented bureaucrats. Central Luzon, on the other hand, is dominated by rice farms where landlords have been politically and economically weakened over time, partly due to cycles of tenancy and land reforms. The main opposition in this region comes from the real estate interest. Its proximity to the national capital facilitated the faster elevation of legal and political agrarian cases from the local to the national levels of the bureaucracy for quicker case resolution. Peasants in this region usually bypass the local bureaucracy and tend to go straight to the national DAR offices, threatening national media exposure if their demands are not immediately met.

Third, the right-hand column in table 5.2 shows that all regions have a fairly high level of anti-reform outcomes — such as VLT and land reform scope deductions, among others — regardless of pre-existing agrarian structures and institutions and the degree of presence or absence of social movements and reform-oriented bureaucrats. However, it is quite apparent that in those regions where social movements and reform-oriented officials were absent, such anti-reform practices were carried out to the maximum, such as in the cases of Ilocos and Central Mindanao regions where anti-reform VLT practices were most rampant.

Fourth, table 5.2 shows that a high level of social movements does not guarantee a high level of land reform outcomes. The cases of the Western Visayas (sugar cane) and Southern Mindanao (modern plantation belt) regions demonstrate situations where despite very high and sustained social movement mobilizations over time, the best outcome that could be achieved is “medium.” On the other hand, however, there are no regions with a high-level presence of social movements where the land reform process resulted in insignificant outcomes. Conversely, there are no regions where social movements were insignificant but where land redistribution outcomes were significant.

Fifth, meanwhile, the presence of strong social movements does not guarantee equally strong pro-reform state–society interaction. Again the cases of Western Visayas and Southern Mindanao regions demonstrate this. But there does seem to be a pattern where the level of pro-reform state–society interactions corresponds to the level of land reform outcome in a region — that is, if the interaction is low, the land reform outcome is low, and vice versa. It is important to note at this point, however, that regional state–society interactions cannot be separated empirically and analytically from the conditions of state–society interaction at the national level. The national level actors intervene quite closely in the regional dynamics, shaping the latter in significant ways. It is not only the physical proximity of a region to the national capital that
provokes national intervention; equally relevant is the national significance of regional issues, such as when the issue involves major transnational companies (as in the case of Southern Mindanao) or entrenched rent-seeking landowning families (as in the case of Western Visayas).

In short, structural and institutional factors do indeed matter in establishing regional patterns of land redistribution. However, more generally, it is the nature, character, and extent of state–society interactions that largely influence the sub-national variation and unevenness in land reform processes and outcomes. This conclusion reinforces our view of the issue, which goes beyond both society-centred and state-centred explanations of policy outcomes.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter presented evidence showing that the nature and extent of CARP land redistribution outcomes are largely influenced by the nature and extent of the pro-reform state–society coalition pushing for land reform. It showed the importance of autonomous rural social movements in the struggle for redistributive land reform. But the chapter also demonstrated that by themselves rural social movements are not sufficient to achieve a greater degree of success in land redistribution campaigns. Reformist initiatives by state actors autonomously emerged over time and proved important in the subsequent swing in CARP implementation towards greater reformism. However, evidence presented showed the inherent limitations of state reformists. The chapter demonstrated that in the case of CARP, the symbiotic interaction between state reformists “from above” and autonomous rural social movements “from below” is the most promising strategy for achieving a greater degree of successful implementation of redistributive land reform. This is demonstrated during the 1992–2000 period.

This strategy has been popularly referred to in the Philippines as the “bibingka strategy” (Borras, 1999, 2001; Franco, forthcoming). Jonathan Fox (1993) refers to it as the “sandwich strategy” in the context of rural Mexico. However, forging such a coalition does not automatically guarantee successful land redistribution, because anti-reform forces attempt to block the reform process through their own state–society alliances. It is when the anti-reform forces are fragmented while the pro-reform alliance remains strong that the chances of successful land redistribution are highest. The extent of pro-reform state–society alliances has been highly uneven and varied across different geographic regions of the country and over time. This unevenness has largely accounted for the variations in land redistribution outcomes between regions
and over time. The most important weakness of this strategy is the fact that it relies on two broad sets of actors, state and civil society, and any unfavourable changes — usually the waning of reformist interest and currents within the state — can paralyze the land reform initiative despite persistent actions from below by peasant organizations and their allies (Franco and Borras, 2005). This is demonstrated by the periods before 1992 and after 2000 in the Philippines.