



**Democratic
"Empowerment"
and
Democratization
of Politics**

RADICAL POPULAR MOVEMENTS
AND THE MAY 1998 PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

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Introduction¹

Why is it that struggles for freedom, civil rights, and democracy become increasingly important in the Third World and in the Far East? Recently, when Bangkok was paralyzed by huge protests against military predominance, most analysts maintained that the disturbances in the area were peasant-based attempts at real revolutions. But later on, these analysts asserted that it was rather capitalism that gained strength, that society was 'modernized,' and that a new increasingly broad middle-class emerged. Further, it is this new middle-class who protested – but mainly against the authoritarian state, and 'only' for freedom, the rule of law, and democracy.

This sweeping generalization can, of course, be questioned. To be sure, many from the lower classes also participate in protests. Further, it is not exactly crystal clear what the new middle class actually encompasses. But generally speaking, more and more people in the urban areas with some skill and education have a little more freedom of action and play a more vital role than other dissatisfied groups. A more important question is whether the new middle class can go beyond merely initiating democratization, and if it is also capable of carrying it through – *and*, in case it is not, if other democratic forces are emerging to carry out this task.

As of now, such questions are not easy to answer.

The most astounding breakthrough for the Third World's new middle class took place in the Philippines in the democratic uprising of February 1986. Peaceful mass demonstrations and protests against massive electoral rigging incapacitated the military and brought down the Marcos regime. The communist-led national democrats and their mainly peasant-based New People's Army (NPA), which until then had continuously gained strength, suddenly lost the initiative. Corazon Aquino became the new president, economic and political liberties were saluted, and the Philippines became in vogue in the international aid market.

¹This is the first in a series of studies (financed by Uppsala University and the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries) on the importance of democratization to radical popular movements as they tackle problems of development in Kerala (India), the Philippines, and Indonesia. Certain movements will be followed over time and this essay is based on the initial round of studies in the Philippines. I am most thankful to all friends *cum* colleagues, political leaders and activists in the Philippines, who in the spirit of mutual trust and interest in critical studies have spent a lot of time, even during hectic election campaigning, discussing with me. Thanks also for the valuable comments on draft versions of this essay to some Filipinos, and colleagues in Sweden and participants in the "International Workshop on Social Movements, State and Democracy" in New Delhi, October, 1992.

Now, more than six years later, it is reasonably fair to begin asking how the still widely esteemed middle class democratization is actually doing. Because of the rather gloomy answer to this question, the major part of this essay will try to answer if new radical popular movements could also become vital in the democratic process.

How is the New Middle Class Democratization Doing?

As late as May 11, 1992, synchronized national, provincial, and local elections² were conducted in the Philippines, while those who demanded democracy in Thailand were just about to be cruelly repressed. Some 75% of the more than 30 million registered voters chose among 88,000 individual candidates who were contesting more than 17,000 positions.³ This election led to the first reasonably democratic transfer of political power since the mid-1960s.⁴ The whole event was unusually peaceful, at least by Philippine standards: from January 12, when the campaign started, till May 24, 'only' 104 people were killed, 105 wounded, and a few kidnapped. The commissioners of the previously much abused Commission on Elections did a surprisingly good job. While the professional coup-plotters kept a low profile, journalists from all over the world found few hot news items to report.

However, financial resources and money were as decisive as usual. Vote-buying still abounded and electoral rigging was still prevalent. Many analysts even claimed that the Philippines had merely returned to the illusive democracy under the semi-feudal political bossism that preceded Marcos and his state of emergency era - that is, to a situation when the post-war guerillas had been marginalized in the mountains, local landlords and businessmen mobilized the votes, and the local oligarchies ran their own armies. At the provincial and national levels, various clans came together, established contact with the US Embassy and formed temporary alliances around the candidates who might be able to win, whereafter successful politicians made use of public means and resources to pay back their sponsors and enrich themselves.

²Elections of leaders in the villages (*barangays*) were held separately.

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

⁴Actually, Mrs. Aquino was not formally elected president in 1986. This was followed by a constitutional referendum (February 1987) and legislative and local elections (May 1987 and January 1988 respectively).

Some years ago, Ben Anderson spoke of the revival of 'cacique democracy'⁵ – a concept which may be related to the mainly Latin American argument that the recent tendency towards the rule of law, civil liberties, and political democratization in the Third World are primarily reactions to the negative features, such as dependency and clientelism, that have grown worse and made authoritarianism untenable. This then opens up the arena for horse trading, institutional arrangements between old and new dominating parties, and clientelistic or corporatist forms of democratic government. The fundamental relations of power and exploitation, however, remain intact.⁶

However, the Philippine situation is not really that bad. Upon a closer examination, the elections indicate rather that old structures are falling apart even while new solid forms have not yet appeared.⁷

The growth of former President Marcos' central powers diminished the influence of the old landlords. At the same time, capitalism expanded in urban, as well as, rural areas. Tenants and workers managed to gain some freedom; certain rice-growing peasants got their own land. When Marcos' state-authoritarianism finally collapsed, it was not possible to return to the old days even if many of the new businessmen still had roots in haciendas and huge plantations. In addition, the number of migrant workers had increased drastically. Many had moved to the cities and taken up jobs within industry, trade and services, and other sectors. Now, contacts and patronage are still vital, but skill and education have become increasingly important. Family loyalties, traditional ideas, and authorities including the Church have become less decisive, even though portions of them have gotten a new lease of life within some of the many fragmented new social movements. 'The truth' is now just as often told by journalists, and movie and TV stars. And this, of course, holds true especially for the younger generations who really say a lot in terms of voting power. More than two-thirds of the potential voters in the recent elections were below 45 years of age and 50 percent were below 35.⁸ Personality-oriented politics may be even more important now than before, and that kind of polity is simultaneously characterized by the falling apart of previously solid social, economic, and cultural bases.

⁵Anderson, Ben. "Cacique Democracy and the Philippines: Origins and Dreams," in *New Left Review*, no. 169, (May-June 1988).

⁶O'Donnell, G., Schmitter, P., and Whitehead, L., (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) cf. Richard Robinson's *The Dynamics of Authoritarianism: Theoretical Debates and the Indonesian Case*, Paper to the ASAA-Conference, (Griffith University, July 1990), pp.9, 24-25.

⁷Cf. Magno, Alex. "The Altered Terrain of Electoral Politics in the Philippines," talk and paper at a seminar at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, 30 April, 1991."

⁸Demographic Distribution of Voting Age Adults based on the 1990 Census as reproduced in *Kasarinlan* vol.7, no.4.(1992) p.138.

Rootless Democracy

Consequently, the old anti-feudal Left has been bypassed in much of the country. On top of its shrinking domestic relevance came the devastating ideological and logistical effects of the breakdown of state-socialism in Eastern Europe and its degeneration in China. Moreover, in the face of the 1992 elections, it was not even possible for the Left to take advantage of 'nationalism' as the Americans had just started to evacuate their military bases.

But all was not well on the side of the traditional politicians. Even the main frontrunner in the presidential race, Ramon Mitra, made a fiasco (getting only 15% of the votes) despite the blessings of Cardinal Sin, as well as having the most extensive network of powerful political bosses all over the country and the most efficient electoral machinery.

So what happened? Did issues become crucial in and determinative of the elections? Did people go for honest politicians who represented their interests and ideas?

Generally speaking, the overall result suggests the opposite.

The winner of the presidential elections, with only 24% of the votes, was a general, Fidel Ramos, who was the head of the constabulary under Marcos until he abandoned his sinking ship and climbed over to that of Cory Aquino's. He was then marketed by the latter as her "Steady Eddie," a nickname implying continuity and stability.

Second, with 20% of the votes, was Miriam Defensor-Santiago – a crossbreed between Ross Perot and Maggie Thatcher – who was carried along by media and the almost infantile message that all evil is due to corruption and can be curbed if politicians are locked up and businessmen given all the possible liberties. Almost as many votes (18%) were given to Eduardo Cojuangco, Marcos' foremost crony-capitalist with endless resources (and full support of the only fairly stable voting block left, the *Iglesia ni Cristo*.) He may even have become the new president had not Imelda Marcos decided to run. She managed to attract 10% of the votes, more than what had been expected.

An old movie star within Cojuangco's camp, Joseph Estrada, became the new vice-president. The nationally elected senate was also decorated with various personalities (usually with roots in the most densely populated parts of the country) among whom a comedian, Vicente "Tito" Sotto, got the most votes.

At the same time, however, modified patronage and political machinery representing various constituencies, governors, and mayors were still very

important in the elections of congressmen. Vote-buying and electoral rigging were most frequent at this level. Local elections were critical as much of the central state powers were to be decentralized. Consequently, many bosses gave priority to their own fiefdoms, while the presidential and senatorial elections ranked second in importance to them.

In conclusion, much of the Philippine polity continues to be a caricature of the individualizing, personality-oriented, and ideology resistant American settler-democracy which was exported to the Philippines and was taken advantage of by feudal-like clans and bosses who, moreover, retain some remnants of Spanish and Chinese culture. It is true that many of the old structures are now falling apart. However, new solid forms fail to appear, including any clear-cut representation of different interests and ideas about societal change. This situation will probably lead to continuous diffusion of public resources and difficulties for the personalities *cum* politicians to form powerful blocks and offer stable political economic leadership. This in turn, may generate demands for a somewhat more authoritarian and 'efficient' regime.

New Base for Democracy?

One of the main problems is that the new middle class democratization still lacks a solid foundation in movements that represent different interests and ideas and with genuine roots among the people.

The vital importance of this factor should be clear if we briefly recall the historical experiences of the democratic breakthrough in Western Europe. The transition to democratic forms of government in Western Europe was first rooted in bourgeois struggles supported by peasants. These conflicts, and the capitalist market economies which followed, made possible a relative separation and diffusion of economic and political power, the rule of law (the *Rechtsstaat*), and certain civil rights. The dominating group then could extend the vote and accept the political sovereignty of the people within a mixed strategy of concessions and cooperation in the face of growing popular demands, especially from the rapidly expanding labor movement. Within the nation-states, political parties with ideological foundations and are rooted in class-based interest groups such as trade unions, peasant cooperatives, or employer's associations became important actors.

Moreover, these structural conditions caused the radical labor-based majority of the important popular movements to organize large parts of society along democratic lines, accept constitutionalism, and give priority to the struggle for popular sovereignty in order to get support for their mainly socialist oriented development projects. Even the movement's own Marxist

understanding of how to transform from within dynamic and comparatively pluralistic capitalist societies contributed to the democratic orientation.

But how will the new-born Philippine democracy be able to gain a similar dynamic foundation? Obviously, the new middle-class cannot build it, at least not on its own. And that, of course, is only natural. While the liberals were definitely important in the democratization of Western Europe, we know it was rather the workers and, to some extent, the peasants who came together in the most powerful popular movements that cemented democracy.

Moreover, this took place only in the process of, or even towards the end of, societal transformations which included drastic industrialization. This caused many scholars to claim that time is not (yet?) ripe for meaningful democracy in countries like the Philippines. One of the more convincing arguments is that while people in large parts of the early industrialized Western Europe were integrated into the political arena through non-personalized state bureaucracies, mass parties, and unions, Third World citizens are instead incorporated via personalized and particularistic politics in societies where a kind of superficial political modernization has preceded industrialization.⁹

In addition, the traditional view among radical popular movements in the Third World has not been to bet on political democratization. Their usual argument was rather that there was a need for extraordinary means to create socio-economic preconditions for meaningful democracy, including real national independence and industrialization plus anti-feudal agrarian reforms.¹⁰

But while, generally speaking, all those obstacles to democratization in the Third World *were* there, one may still wonder if the political and socio-economic transformations during the last few decades in countries such as the Philippines have not altered these conditions. Of course, the new situation is much different from the one that bred democratization in Western Europe. Even the newly-industrializing countries, which the Philippines would like to join, are not experiencing the same protracted industrial and cultural transformations, but rather seem to be turning rapidly into unevenly developed service societies with a huge, though heterogeneous, new middle class. There is a need to probe into the actual processes and social forces upon which democracy could, perhaps, be anchored.

⁹Mouzelis, Nicos P., *Politics in the Semi-Periphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialization in the Balkans and Latin America*, (London: Mac millan, 1986).

¹⁰Cf. Tornquist, Olle., *Dilemmas of Third World Communism: The Destruction of the PKI in Indonesia* (London: Zed Books, 1984), *What's Wrong with Marxism? On Capitalists and State in India and Indonesia* (New Delhi: Manohar 1991), and *What's Wrong with Marxism? vol.2: On Peasants and Workers in India and Indonesia* (New Delhi: Manohar 1991) plus "Democracy and the Philippine Left" in *Kasarinlan* vol. 6, no. 1-2 (1990); also in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), vol. XXVI no. 27-29, (1991).

The once strong revolutionaries, for instance, should have had rather wide popular support. What do the people say about these elements today? And what has happened to all the cause oriented groups and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were so important in bringing down the Marcos regime and carrying Cory Aquino into office? Was this perhaps the beginning of an alliance between the new middle class and the weak groups in the society? Are there no indications of *any* promising tendencies in the recent Philippine elections?

If one examines the present main actors in Philippine politics, it is definitely possible to identify new processes and movements that may become important and tell us a lot about options and problems in anchoring democracy.

Situating and Explaining Movements and Democracy

How can this study of movements and new processes be carried out? One way would be to explore if and when democracy makes sense to various representative social movements, and then to control variables such as their perspectives and peculiar conditions. Preliminary studies indicate that even some important popular movements with roots in the still dominant and non-democratic revolutionary Left are now in the process of actually focusing on democratization. Since this is a unique opportunity to follow new movements which, in their own specific contexts, could perhaps shoulder some of the democratic tasks carried out by the labor movement in Western Europe, I have decided to concentrate on a few such movements instead of making a wider selection.

This, of course, reduces the number of cases to choose from in trying to operationalize different explanatory variables and relate them to the politics (and policies) of democratization in movements. The conventional comparative studies method of studying similar cases with different outcomes and looking for the variations that might explain these may be supplemented by (1.) different cases with similar outcomes, and by (2.) attempts at explaining these by identifying what they nevertheless have in common. Moreover, because of the lack of information and data in this field, we may simply have to confine ourselves to the generation of hypotheses by way of systematically contrasting democratization in different contexts, thus allowing for commentary on the specificity of each case.¹¹

¹¹ Cf. Skocpol, T. and Somers, M., "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 22, 1980, pp. 174-197.

The handling of all these will be spelled out as the concrete analyses proceeds. Examples of the three most exciting 'democratic tendencies' in the Philippines have been selected and a study of how these tendencies first arrived at their new orientations has been carried out.¹² This essay begins to follow them critically over time, starting off with the 1992 elections. (In later studies, the Philippine case will also be compared with similarly intriguing movements in the different settings of Kerala and Java.¹³) The general task is to probe into the kinds of politics of democratization they focus on, if any, and to discuss how these could be explained.

Moreover, when analyzing politics (and policies) of democratization in movements, statements and activities need to be filtered through a non-partisan conceptualization of democracy and democratization.

However, even though a definition of democracy should be limited, it is not enough to ask to what extent and in what way work carried out by the movements studied is characterized by *the essence of democracy in terms of sovereignty of the people in accordance with the principle of political equality or one-person-one-vote*. We know that this principal point is closely associated with many other factors. A wide classification into four groups of such factors will be indicated below. Their importance and composition may vary from one society to another, and scholars, as well as actors (such as movements) do, of course, have different opinions about them.

The first cluster of factors are the *preconditions for meaningful democracy*. Our next question is thus: What conditions do the various movements stress, try to promote, or set aside in different contexts over time? For instance, the right to organize and to express opinions, questions of human rights, constitutionalism, and the rule of law? Social and economic equality or autonomy that allows people to be candidates in elections and especially to cast their votes in accordance with their opinions? How much of these are regarded as necessary?

Second, what *forms of democracy* do the movements support (or try to avoid)? Is it decentralized government with extensive participation (direct control), pressure politics, and cooperative efforts instead of or in addition to representation (indirect control), parties, and participation in national and/or local elections? What (if any) constitutional arrangements are important? What about the problem of 'democratic centralism' within radical organizations?

¹²Tornquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left" *op. cit.*

¹³Cf. Tornquist, *Popular Movements, Development and Democracy: Comparative Case Studies of the Importance of Democratization for Radical Popular Movements as they tackle problems of Development in India, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Brief presentation of a research program*, (Uppsala, Spring 1992). For a back ground study regarding the Indian case in Kerala, see Tornquist, "Communists and Democracy: Two Indian Cases and One Debate" in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* vol. 23:2 (1991).

The third concerns the *extension of democracy*. Do the movements try to spread democratic forms of government to almost all levels of human activity? Where do they draw the line between state and 'civil society'? Within what parts of 'civil society'? (Companies? Cooperatives? NGOs?) And who will have the right to vote? Moreover, how do they tackle the problem of monopoly and non-democratic governance of already publicly controlled and regulated resources? Do they resort to privatization or some kind of democratic rule?

Finally, *the content*. Can democratically decided policies be undemocratic and run counter to the necessary prerequisites for meaningful democracy? Do they also include measures giving rise to serious inequalities? Do their own ends justify undemocratic means?¹⁴

The politics of democratization of movements remains to be explained. However, as already indicated, most of the scholarly knowledge in this particular field is rather sketchy. Hence, it is reasonable to limit oneself to the discussion of more precise hypotheses in relation to the two dimensions emphasized in the general discourse: firstly, the political, economic, and social conditions which the movements are up against as they try to promote a radically different approach to development, and which thus determines what they can actually do, and secondly, their own more or less Marxist oriented understanding of the situation and the prospects for change.

Instead of approaching the full range of structural factors that may or may not generate interest in democratization, we can make things easier by starting off from certain significant and concrete 'projects,' such as cooperatives or projects for the improvement of squatter's bargaining power. The meaning of democratic politics to the movements may be determined by studying the main political, economic, and social obstacles that they have confronted in their specific contexts. The obstacles and difficulties vary between the movements, as well as over time, and the point is of course to analyze and compare how these problems relate to what we know about the movement's politics of democratization.

Finally, the question remains as to whether each movement's more or less Marxist understanding of the situation has supported or prevented

¹⁴ If we now combine the minimum definition of democracy in terms of sovereignty of the people in accordance with the principle of political equality, or one-person-one-vote, and the important factors classified into four groups (1.) Certain necessary preconditions for democracy to become meaningful, 2.) the forms in which democracy is exercised, 3.) the degree to which democracy is extended to various sectors of the society, 4.) what policies and actions, even if democratically decided, that support or undermine the necessary preconditions for meaningful democracy], it is possible to conclude by offering a more comprehensive, but unfortunately, still general definition - *the actual capacity of the adult citizens to exercise in various forms equal and effective rule over resources which they hold in common without thereby undermining the absolutely necessary prerequisites for this rule.*

democratic politics. This should be possible to answer if we begin to identify their own *basic* reading of the situation, for instance, in terms of fundamental social and economic contradictions, as well as their *related long term* strategic calculations. We will then be able to examine if those basic perspectives have, firstly, considered the actual structural obstacles that the movements face, and, secondly, formed the more specific politics of democratization, which otherwise may simply be pragmatic. And if so, in what way?

Moreover, with such an approach we may then conclude whether the movements are more or less democratic. A reasonable materialistic assumption is namely, that while many actors may maintain that democracy is important, their consistency may be doubted as long as their democratic politics does not go beyond the level of fine principles and simple tactics.

New Attempts at Radical National Politics of Democratization

At this stage, it is of course impossible to make full use of the idea of comparing various movements in quite different contexts over time. But the results from the initial studies may be supplemented with previous background analyses. This will enable us to trace the different tendencies.

So let us start now with a brief introduction of the national scene before identifying characteristic processes at work.

Crisis in the Mainstream Left Opens Up the Field for New Alternatives

The Left as a whole is still dominated by the old mainstream 'national democrats.' For most of them, political democratization in general and electoral politics in particular are simply not meaningful, at least not at this stage.¹⁵

One of their principal arguments is that even if most people are now able to organize and express their opinions, and even if the abuses of human rights are now less widespread than before, the basic relations of power have not been changed and the social and economic inequalities are still so severe that a majority of the citizens cannot vote in accordance with their own interests.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cf. Tornquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left," *op. cit.*

¹⁶ This argument is also found in the otherwise "flexible" statement by the National Democratic Front's (NDF) former chairperson Mr. Satur Ocampo in an open forum held at the University of the Philippines, August 29, 1991. See *Kasarinlan* vol. 7, nos. 2 and 3, (1992), pp. 177-180.

Moreover, according to conventional national democratic thinking, further *political* democratization would not help much to alter power relations and inequalities. In other words, since politicians, administrators, and so-called 'bureaucratic capitalists' have no real bases of power of their own and, instead, rely on powerful imperialists, *compradors*, and landlords, they could not be hit at by way of political democratization. Thus, even if more progressive people were elected, they would not have access to resources and will have almost no room for maneuver.

Aside from using elections for propaganda purposes and horse-trading, one must therefore, the argument continues, hold on to extra-parliamentary and armed struggles against landlords, capitalists, and other fundamental enemies. Also, this requires an authoritarian but enlightened leadership – at the expense of democratic principles within the movement – as well as cooperation with other progressive movements.

For some time now, however, the national democrats themselves have been in serious crisis.¹⁷ The armed units are on the defensive, popular support is dwindling, and the logistical problems are severe. Many of the leading members have been rounded up or have opted for other forms of struggle. Old theses and strategies are being questioned, especially but not only, within the legal branches of the movement.¹⁸ The members are far from agreeing on what to reconsider and how to go ahead with the struggle.

This situation may even lead to a full scale disintegration, especially since many progressive members who have invested most of their lives in the movement find it difficult to change or give up without substantial achievements or new options.

Concerned dissidents, however, are eager not to push the debate too far. They choose to stand provocations from orthodox and stubborn leaders, and instead contribute to the negotiation of a sensible settlement with the government. Once this is achieved,¹⁹ there shall be more space for fresh alternatives, especially among the many 'nat-dem-led' organizations, as well as among 'their' cause-oriented groups and non-governmental organizations.

¹⁷ The following is based mainly on interviews with sympathizers, concerned dissidents, and analysts who must remain anonymous.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g., the discussion in *Debate: Philippine Left Review*, from March 1991 and onwards, and *Kasarinlan* vol.8, no. 1 (1992).

¹⁹ As of this writing, preliminary talks have started between the new Ramos administration, via its National Unification Commission (under the much respected Haydee Yorac, who has even included Horacio Morales and Bernabe Buscayno among her consultants), and, among others, certain national democratic leaders in exile, including the orthodox CPP founding chairman Joma Sison.

In the 1992 elections, most national democrats were not yet ready to step outside the old fold. Rather, many leaders within the open sections of the movement tried to stress important issues, bet on 'electoral education,' and endorsed 'progressive candidates.' For instance, in 1991 they made an attempt to revive the legal national democratic party *Partido ng Bayan*.²⁰ Furthermore, in early April the next year, 'their own' movements were brought together in a separate non-partisan electoral committee, *Kapatiran*,²¹ to "reinforce the people's organized strength in projecting major issues."²²

The 'Soft Left' Enters into Electoral Politics

The crisis has also contributed to a more democratic form of cooperation among the many factions of the Left.²³ National democratic leaders are no longer hegemonic. Many dissident groups feel more self-confident than before. Even though some are wary of the risk of being 'guilty by association' whenever well-known national democratic organizations are included in joint ventures, they also know that there is a need for such a broad unity. At the same time, the national democrats cannot ignore what the others want to do - to engage in elections, for instance - since these people can now get things started on their own.

A broad front was not possible before the 1992 elections. However, for the first time in decades, at least three 'soft' sections of the Left took elections seriously. They were able to initiate electoral cooperation and work smoothly with each other.

²⁰ PnB (People's Party) See e.g., the interview with Loretta Rosales and her paper "The Dilemma of Liberal Democracy," in *Conjuncture*, vol. V, nos. 2 and 3, (1992).

²¹ *Kilusan ng Alternatibong Pulitika para sa Inang Bayan*, with some 40 organizations including *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* (BAYAN, New Nationalist Alliance.)

²² Quoted from *Coalition Corner* (published by the Institute for Popular Democracy) April 3, 1992.

²³ In this section, unless otherwise specified, I am drawing from interviews done in the Hague, February 7, 1992 and in the Philippines from mid-April until mid-May 1992, with leaders and activists related to the *Akbayan* movement - Randolph David, Karina Constantino-David, Ed de la Torre, Ronald Umasas, Gerry Bulatao, Clark Soriano, Bong Malonzo, Jurgette Honculade, Isagani Serrano, Lisa Dacanay, Arman Alforque, and Gwen Ngolaban - as well as on related articles and documents such as in *Conjuncture*, vol IV-V, (1991-1992), platform and campaign materials of the *Akbayan* (and its local partner in Cebu), documents related to the electoral work and institute of BISIG (including "BISIG's Orientation to Parliamentary Struggle," "Tentative Workplan: BISIG Electoral Work," "Proposal for a Three-Year Trajectory for BISIG," "Electoral Education Program for Popular Organizations," and "Institute for Electoral Education: Progress Report") and e.g. Rene Ciria-Cruz' talk in the Hague, 7 February 1992 entitled "Why the Philippine Left must take the Parliamentary Road" reproduced in *Debate: Philippine Left Review*, No. 2, (March 1992), cf. also the interview with him in *Conjuncture*, Vol. IV:4, April 1991. I have also benefitted from a draft version of Eric Gutierrez' case study of the 1992 electoral coalitions within IPD's coalition research project.

These 'three little pigs' include the socialist BISIG-movement²⁴, the rethinking social democrats of *Pandayan*,²⁵ and the similarly rethinking former national democrats of the Movement for Popular Democracy (MPD).

None of them are parties, but are rather groups promoting slightly different ideas about 'new politics.'²⁶ Also, these political blocks linked up with like-minded cause-oriented groups, NGOs, and interest organizations (such as unions) to form a partisan electoral movement: *Akbayan*. They adopted the core elements of the 'popular development agendas' generated by various broad progressive movements (of which national democrats are also part) as their own program. The key words were 'people's interest,' 'participatory democracy,' 'sustainable development,' and 'genuine structural reforms.'²⁷

In the spirit of realism, *Akbayan* also became a part of the liberal electoral coalition, *Koalisyon Pambansa* (National Coalition). This was actually brokered by leading members of the 'three little pigs.'²⁸ It was the only block with the same ideological profile, radical propositions, and progressive candidates, at least on the national level (which included the generally respected senators Jovito "Jovy" Salonga, ex-speaker of the Senate and person responsible for carrying through the anti-US bases Treaty campaign, and Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel, primus motor in decentralizing state powers, as presidential and vice-presidential candidates respectively; plus, for instance, the radical nationalist senator Wigberto "Bobby" Tanada and consistent NGO spokesman and expelled agrarian secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad as senatorial candidates).

There was also an exciting attempt among a broad group of generally progressive NGOs to gradually intervene in politics - the so-called Project

²⁴ *Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa*, (BISIG, The Alliance for the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Action).

²⁵ *Pandayan para sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas*, (Workshop for a Socialist Philippines).

²⁶ Moreover, they are almost exactly the same progressive forces within the Left that were identified in an earlier paper (Torquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left," *op. cit.*) as those most likely to propel democracy - which in turn made me select two of my local cases for closer study within the folds of BISIG and the Movement for Popular Democracy (MPD) or the "popular democrats." And while "my" third propelling force (led by Dante Buscayno) was not directly involved in this new cooperation, it was instead most active locally.

²⁷ *Akbayan* adopted the development agenda generated by the National Peace Conference, People's Caucus, Green Forum, Project 2001, and the CODE-NGO. Cf. also *People's Agenda for Development and Democracy*, (Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, Ateneo de Manila University, 1992).

²⁸ See "Platform for Participatory Democracy and Sustainable Development of the *Koalisyon Pambansa*," in *Conjecture*, vol. V, no. 2, (1992).

2001.²⁹ This time, however, almost the only thing they could agree on was partisan 'electoral education,' including information as to which candidates could be expected to support the aims and means of the NGOs.

Many 'soft' leftists often emphasized that they simply had to participate in elections because they needed legitimacy and because people in general were fond of elections and would only participate in an insurrection if reactionary forces distorted elections as what happened in 1986. Besides, they believe that all other avenues, including armed struggle, are closed. Furthermore, their own work, plus the NGOs, unions, etc., would be threatened if a new rightist regime came into office. The so-called 'democratic space' was at stake.

Simultaneously, the *Akbayan* people were about to develop something more than sensitive pragmatism – namely a strategic view of democratization and elections. This time they wanted to gain experience, reach out to as many people as possible, and prepare the ground for further engagement in forthcoming elections (village or *barangay* leaders will be elected in 1994 and 1997; half of the senators, plus the congressmen, governors, and mayors in 1995; and all the senators, congressmen, governors, and mayors plus the president and vice-president in 1998.)

In contrast to the mainstream national democratic view, *Akbayan* maintained that the minimum prerequisites for a meaningful democracy actually exists in the post-Marcos era despite all the social and economic inequalities. Moreover, further democratization, they said, would be of critical importance in helping them alter the Philippine path to development. This was not because their reading of the fundamental social and economic forces at work had been modified. They still maintained that the important sources of power were outside the state and not subject to political competition. For instance, few references were made to analyses that indicate that one of the reasons for the importance of the electoral struggles was that the politicians and bureaucrats monopolized vital resources which should be democratically governed. On the contrary, almost everyone was eager to stress that the new politics of democratization was subordinated to their old basic work as unionists, development activists, and so on. This work, they said, was the only way to alter the relations of power in society and thereby create more favorable preconditions for democracy.

Most of the *Akbayan* people had previously limited themselves to lobbying and pressure politics; *viz.* extra-parliamentary politics. Many leaders,

²⁹ Cf. *Project 2001, An Electoral Movement of the NGO Community* (mimeographed statement 1992[?]), *Project 2000: NGO Intervention in the Electoral Process*, Talk by Florencio Abad, 26 February 1991, Reproduced in *Conjunction*, vol.IV:4, (1991), plus his talk at an open forum at the University of the Philippines, 29 August, 1991, reproduced in *Kasarinlan*, vol. 7, nos. 2 and 3, (1992), pp. 180-183, and "New Politics as the Art of Combining and Balancing" talk by Gerry Bulatao, Secretary-General of Project 2001, 7 September, 1991.

especially within the NGOs, led the struggles against the authoritarian state by supporting people's own initiatives in 'civil society' rather than trying to grab state power. Demands for participatory democracy were added. On top of this, the *Akbayan* people agreed to *supplement* pressure politics, development, and democratic activism by making use of their work and confidence among people to mobilize votes for progressive representatives.

*Challenging Results*³⁰

The entry of leftist groups into the liberal coalition accentuated its fairly radical image. This was hardly a problem with regard to support among concerned citizens, but surely it was in terms of money. Traditional business funding for the allied liberal parties (like the Liberal Party and the PDP-Laban³¹) dried up. As mentioned, the 'soft Left' had tried to be realistic in brokering and associating with the coalition and its electoral machine but this apparatus began to break down. Some politicians with more resources defected to rival camps. As a result, the campaign lost momentum. There was not even enough money to feed devoted poll-watchers in some places (even though related Christian groups did their part of the job.) The poor and inexperienced Left found itself in the midst of something more exacting and burdensome than what they had asked for. In the late hours of the counting, several overstrained leaders and activists even remarked that they should just have launched their own candidates instead. (Interestingly, when the vice-Mayor candidate in General Santos [on the southern tip of Mindanao] dropped out at a late stage, the Left decided to launch its own man and was not too far from winning.)

Moreover, most of the *Akbayan* people were usually busy with development work, unionism, etc. which were not linked to partisan and electoral politics. Their campaign work was therefore a different task which could not be attended to until it was too late. Many activists did not find time at all for the campaign. Further delay was caused by the intricate negotiations with the other progressive groups and movements that they tried to bring into the coalition. Locally, there were often more progressive candidates outside the folds of the LP-PDP than inside. This further complicated things and called for supplementary forms of cooperation. On top of these came the uphill task of convincing people, whom the Left had been telling for years and years that it did not matter which way they voted, that this time it will make a difference. As a result, rival candidates gained a lot of votes even from people who otherwise fought them.

³⁰ In this section, I am drawing mainly from the same interviews and materials as those mentioned in footnote 23 plus more local interviews and documents regarding *Akbayan*-related work in Cebu and in Bataan.

³¹ Philippine Democratic Party - Strength of the Nation.

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

Consequently, the results in terms of the voting were quite disappointing. Nonetheless, the new Left made a difference. If we limit ourselves to the national scene, Salonga and Pimentel, for instance, seem to have done rather well in areas given priority by the Left. But altogether, Salonga got only about the same number of votes as Imelda Marcos (10%). The foremost senatorial candidate Florencio "Butch" Abad remained out in the cold. Just one official liberal (although radical) nominee slipped into the senate - Wigberto "Bobby" Tanada - perhaps partly because he was the only candidate who was also acceptable among traditional national democrats.

However, all these hardly caused the new Left to give up its democratic orientation. To begin with, no important organization or leader has so far claimed the outcome to indicate that they no longer have to use elections to gain legitimacy and defend their own work, that minimum prerequisites for democracy really do not exist, and that further democratization would not be of critical importance in their struggle for an alternative path of development.

On the contrary, many leaders stress that the ongoing decentralization of state powers to provinces and municipalities - as provided for by the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991³² - will make it both necessary and play a significant role.

First, they say it will be necessary because a lot of important resources and powers shall be allocated to local politicians and bureaucrats. So, if the new Left does not try to enter into that playground and stand up for the popular interests, people will simply link up with other groups and various patrons instead, while the Left will be marginalized in the background.

Secondly, they claim it will be possible to do this since the LGC itself stipulates, among other things, that NGO representatives shall constitute no less than one-fourth of the local development councils. And when it comes to local political candidates, the grassroots organizations should be better equipped to mobilize support for *and* keep track of them.

³² Otherwise known as Republic Act No. 7160, the LGC took effect on January 1, 1992.

However, if the new Left shall be able to really alter local, and eventually national politics and policies, it is absolutely vital that its capacity to carry out actions and alternative development work to 'empower' people be transformed into votes and influence within the political system. The most serious problem is what the recent elections have clearly demonstrated – that this can hardly be achieved through temporary electoral alliances and campaign machinery. Electoral politics still proved to be the home ground of political clans, bosses, machines, as well as increasingly important media-personality candidates.

The new Left can, of course, always advocate constitutional reforms and a new electoral system. Yet, since a lot of powerful interests are vested in the present set-up, it will in reality either have to adjust to it or fight it out. That is, either continue along an enlightened US model of further developing pressure politics, lobbying, and temporary alliances behind as many progressive personalities as possible or try to transform the system from within. The latter is what most leaders now have in mind.

But then again, as the recent experiences indicate, merely compiling ideas and pooling resources under one umbrella is not enough. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. (Which is not, however, to say that it can be proclaimed from above.) The problem is how to combine general political issues with the daily struggles for various interests and alternative development work so that broad political consciousness and popular movements are established when elections come up and will, thus, be able to generate parties or similar organizations.

In other words, the task is overwhelming. In a former colony where capitalism expands, the new Left must not only work out a realistic alternative to bygone national democratic paths to development. It must also, at the same time, try to form genuine and powerful popular movements which may propel democratization in the process of trying to implement a new political development project.

The question then is if there are any tendencies indicating that such movements and such an interest in democratization are at all under way in spite of the seemingly hostile environment.

Radical Popular Movements and Democratization: Local Tendencies

To have an idea about conceivable linkages between the attempts at alternative paths to development and the growth of genuine and powerful popular movements working for democratization, it is necessary to turn to some specific local cases.

Cases and Contexts

The cases to be examined are local chapters within the folds of the MPD (the 'popular democrats' or 'pop-dems') and the socialist BISIG-movement in the province of Bataan and Cebu City, respectively, and the cooperative efforts of the NPA founding commander Bernabe "Commander Dante" Buscayno - the People's Livelihood Foundation in Central Luzon. Despite the fact that these politically significant movements in vital parts of the country have much of their roots within the traditional Left that did not focus on democratization, they have, nevertheless, begun to seriously do so since the mid-80s.

The popular democrats are usually associated with leading dissidents of the traditional Left such as Edicio de la Torre and Horacio Morales.³³ In the mid-80s, they retreated from communist-led fronts and worked out platforms for broad coalitions, which admitted the use of elections against then President Marcos, and for the development of a non-elitist or 'popular democracy.' The present MPD grew out of committed middle class professionals, industrialists, and intellectuals.³⁴ As their post-Marcos coalitions did not generate substantial gains from either critical support of the early Aquino government or from participation in the 1987 elections, their efforts to help vulnerable people to become reasonably autonomous citizens were increased. This was deemed a basic prerequisite for the development of democracy. The most important national umbrella institutions are the research and political policy oriented Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) and the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) which initiate and service development projects and grassroots organizations simultaneously with efforts to promote coalitions and 'people's councils.' Their intentions are perhaps best reflected locally through the PRRM-work designed and led by Isagani Serrano and Lisa Dacanay in the province of Bataan, the peninsula northeast of Manila Bay.³⁵

³³ Father "Ed" de la Torre initiated the Christians for National Liberation in the early '70s; Horacio "Boy" Morales was a celebrated executive secretary under Marcos and head of the prestigious Development Academy until he defected shortly before he was to be awarded as one of the "Ten Outstanding Young Men" in 1977 and rebuilt instead the communist-led National Democratic Front until he was imprisoned in 1982.

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

³⁴ The people in the MPD first spoke of themselves as the Volunteers for Popular Democracy.

³⁵ For a general introduction, see *Bataan: A Case Study on Ecosystem Approach to Sustainable Development in the Philippines* (Quezon City, PRRM, 1992).

BISIG was founded in May 1986 by radical socialists and Marxists with various backgrounds, including Christian social democracy, trade union work, community activism, concerned scholarship, and the new, as well as old, communist movements.³⁶ BISIG will be studied here by focusing on its electoral institute (which is partly supported by the Swedish labor movement³⁷) and the concrete work of two BISIG-related NGOs based in Cebu City. These NGOs are the Fellowship for Organizing Endeavors (FORGE) and the Cebu Labor Education Research Center (CLEAR). These NGOs promote community development and organization among urban poor and fisherfolk, and unions, respectively.

Finally, Bernabe Buscayno's cooperative efforts in Tarlac, Central Luzon will be focused on. Tarlac is the site of the first serious resistance against the Japanese occupation and neo-colonial governments. It is also where Commander Dante founded the NPA in 1969.³⁸

While in prison (1976-1986), Dante produced new ideas but failed to change the line of the national democrats even after the fall of Marcos, and despite the fact that he was the Left senatorial candidate in the 1987 elections who gained the most votes. He returned to Tarlac to start anew among peasants who had forced Marcos to implement a partial land reform, and who now face exploitative businessmen with good political contacts and who control inputs, rice-mills, marketing, etc. The new liberties under Mrs. Aquino made it possible to organize Dante's NGO-foundation, to ask for government credits, and initiate legal cooperation among some 500 suspicious but loyal petty farmers. After two years, the results were phenomenal: some 8000 farmers with individual plots,³⁹ efficient and collective use of modern inputs and methods, drastically increased production, collective market arrangements, lesser indebted farmers and better paid workers, new jobs, a collective rice-mill, a duck farm, a fishpond, production of organic fertilizers, government credits repaid ahead of schedule... Despite the fact that it was faced with a lot of problems including the devastating Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991, it engaged in reconstruction work and actively participated in the recent local elections.

³⁶ Among the personalities are trade union leader "Bong" Malonzo, Professor "Randy" David (TV-talk-show-host), Professor "Dodong" Nemenzo (columnist), and Karina Constantino-David (senior community development organizer). For a somewhat more comprehensive analysis and for further references, see Tornquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left," *op. cit.* See also *The Socialist Vision and Other Documents* (Quezon City, BISIG, 1987) cf. relevant parts of footnote 23.

³⁷ I'd like to thank Jan Hodann of the AIC (International Center of the Swedish Labor Movement) for the fruitful discussions.

³⁸ For a more comprehensive analysis, see Tornquist, "Fighting for Democracy in the Philippines," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, (June 30, 1990), and Tornquist, "Democracy and the Philippine Left," *op. cit.*

³⁹ Actually, the cooperative efforts encompassed larger areas than the famous sugar-growing Hacienda Luisita which is partially owned by Mrs. Corazon Aquino and covers some 6000 hectares. While the cooperative efforts are, of course, endowed with less capital, they continued to expand even more.

The movements' politics of democratization – which of course vary – may be analyzed by viewing similarities and differences in their basic perspectives and ways of organizing.⁴⁰ Generally speaking, they all share Marxist oriented approaches to society and social change and try to link NGO-work and popular organizations in building broad movements.

BISIG tries to indigenize new left thinking of the late 1960s to the present in Europe, North America, and Latin America, including the dependency perspectives and attempts to renew radicalism within the European labor movement and related cooperative and educational organizations. Union and community organizing, thus, goes hand in hand with attempts to build a radical democratic socialist party.

The popular democrats, on the other hand, try to go beyond the Asian and Maoist national democratic tradition by bringing in some of the new Left thinking with recent international discourse on 'civil society against the state' in general, and the role of NGOs and 'sustainable development' in particular.

Finally, Commander Dante, who is probably open to most of the new influences mentioned as long as they make practical sense in Tarlac and fit into his own renewed combination of deterministic analysis, adopts flexible Leninist tactics and dynamic leadership.

Further, the movements' politics of democratization varies with their respective socio-economic and political contexts.

The BISIG-cases to be focused on are located among urban poor communities and unions, as well as sections of the middle class in the rapidly expanding commercial and industrial center of Cebu City where political clans still dominate and where national democratic organizations are rather strong.

The site of the work of the popular democrats in Bataan, on the other hand, is not the well known Export Processing Zone on the southern tip of the Peninsula. In broad coalition work in this environmentally hard hit province, the popular democrats are instead mainly active among rural and semi-rural communities of small farmers and fisherfolk, petty-businessmen, and other weak sections of the population. Traditional politicians dominate, and the national democratic movement, which until recently was rather strong, has suffered from severe repression.

The case of Dante, finally, takes us to Tarlac – the home province of the Aquinos and Cojuangcos, as well as of the revolutionary peasant movement.

⁴⁰For the following, I am mainly drawing from interviews with and documents from the leading personalities already mentioned plus Ms. Gwen Ngolaban of FORGE in Cebu, in addition to the general references on the popular democrats, BISIG, and Dante's project

This is the agricultural heartland of Central Luzon, with small scale rice farmers, big sugar-growing haciendas, petty as well as big traders, commercial centers, and some industries, all of which are affected by the Mount Pinatubo eruption.

What do my initial studies indicate? Two major tendencies seem to be at work in historical sequence: democratic empowerment and democratization of politics.

(1.) Democratic 'Empowerment'

In the Third World, even celebrated radical and popularly based movements for national liberation have rarely been capable of transforming themselves into equally progressive forces in further developing their countries. Of course, resources have been scarce and the enemies remain powerful and well organized. But that was also true during the liberation struggle. What makes the difference are changing conditions which have not been properly understood and read. Previously necessary forms of struggle, including armed resistance, still shape organizational logics and even the minds of many activists. As a result, members and leaders turn pragmatic, while organizations often degenerate. Thus, alternative perspectives and movements emerge.

Much more could, of course, be said about this. But my point here is that similar processes are at work among the Philippine revolutionary movements – old forms of struggle designed to fight the Marcos regime are still being adopted.

'Our' cases vary in terms of contexts and basic perspectives, but one pattern is quite clear – fundamental conditions changed as capitalism expanded and reduced the importance of landlordism. These conditions allowed for new forms of government. The old organizations were rarely capable of reading these and renewing themselves. Dissidents came forward with alternative analyses and propositions and worked out concepts on how the existing movements should be able to support at least in supplementary efforts. But even devoted, emphatic, and well funded attempts to find some new *modus vivendi* often failed. Thus, a new generation of popular movements emerged, which instead of fighting for political power tries to start from below by addressing people's immediate problems of survival and development. And in the process of doing so, it seems as if they also find it quite important to promote democratic cooperation outside the direct framework of the state.

Bataan is a good case in point.⁴¹ Many, more or less legal, national democratic mass movements grew outside the realm of armed resistance. When Marcos was ousted and the democratic space was wide enough, PRRM worked out progressive development projects and tried to base them among already existing popular organizations. PRRM's projects were supplementary efforts because they did not want to refute what had already been done. Why should they try to build new organizations when so many already existed?

But repressive state policies against the guerillas made these progressive leaders vulnerable. The critical problem was that the various movements in which PRRM had tried to base new development efforts (such as credit cooperatives) fell like houses of cards as soon as the leaders were threatened. Thus, the movements proved to be mainly rejectionist campaign machines within the framework of revolutionary national democratic struggles.

Consequently, the popular democrats emphasized instead the need to strengthen 'civil society.' They simply had to help people form new organizations of their own through which they could make use of the education and resources provided by PRRM.

In addition, it became more and more obvious to the popular democrats that the problems of development in Bataan had to be tackled head on. Sweeping political changes were not on the agenda. For the time being, one had to live with the harsh political situation, playing down different interests within communities and focusing on issues that most people could agree on and manage themselves. One method was to help people map out their own problems as well as potential resources and to introduce democratically governed cooperatives from within.

The character of the immediate difficulties, as the popular democrats analyzed, called for integrated efforts between the communities themselves and the region. For instance, environmental destruction was often so urgent that many people's livelihood were directly threatened. Wide scale cooperation had to be developed. The popular democrats try therefore, among other things, to promote various coalitions and initiate councils where organizations and movements can come together. Local businessmen are also brought in. Working relations with the 'actually existing politicians' are skillfully cultivated but mainly to defend, and if possible expand, the space for NGO-activities and popular initiatives in 'civil society.'

⁴¹I am mainly relying on interviews done in April and May 1992 with Isagani Serrano, Lisa Dacanay, Ed de la Torre, and discussions with community organizers in Bataan and documents such as the "PRRM Rural Development and Democratization Program of 1988," the ditto proposal for 1991, the "Program Status Report (January-August, 1990)," "The SRDDP-Bataan Area Perspective Plan for 1992-1996," "Bataan Province as an Area of Intervention for SRDDP (1991)," "SRDDP-Bataan Proposed Operations Plan for 1992," and the writings of Serrano, including "A Community Empowerment Strategy for Sustainable Development" (1991) and "A Popular Democratic Agenda for Transformation" (1991).

Similar processes appear in Cebu City.⁴² In Cebu, capitalism is really on the offensive. A huge metropolitan development program has been launched to turn Cebu into another Hong Kong. Thus, many urban areas will be 'developed,' viz. cleared of poor settlers. Land is to be classified as entirely commercial rather than residential. Hence, even if squatters organize and try to buy their plots, the prices are too high and they would not be able to live there anyway. They will, therefore, be displaced. All these people will instead be offered living quarters up in mountain *barangays* where there is almost no means of livelihood, transportation to the city takes a long time and is expensive, and where basic social services are lacking. While more jobs will be available in the cities, it will take some time before these factories open.

One major dilemma now is how to tackle all these problems. It follows from the old revolutionary paradigm that the urban poor should reject the entire metropolitan development program and line up in front of the bulldozers. People would then get rid of all their illusions about the present system. The ones in power would be threatened. The struggle for state power would then only take a few steps forward.

However, dissident activists connected with BISIG argue that this will not do any good. Capitalism, while still in dynamic progress, can be resisted but not overthrown. So, until there are realistic alternatives, one must instead try to help the urban poor survive and strengthen their bargaining power for better conditions. Almost like in Bataan, this is done by taking part in community organizing as part of various self-help activities. And this has emphasized the need for participatory democracy on the local level as well as the formation of various instruments for broader cooperation. In a short period of time this new path proved quite popular.

Finally, while the same general tendencies are also at work in the case of Dante's activities in Tarlac, the outcome in terms of democratization is rather different because of the special character and dynamics of his project.⁴³

Cooperatives are initiated to help people raise their standard of living and 'empower' themselves. But while the PRRM in Bataan first tried to supplement old 'national democratic' mass movements, Dante found it necessary to build new ones. As hinted at earlier, he had the revised radical view that the feudal-like structures had been penetrated by partial land

⁴²I draw mainly from interviews done in Cebu City in early May 1992 with Ms. Gwen Ngolaban and community organizers of FORGE plus documents like "FORGE-Orientation" (no date). Cf. footnote 23.

⁴³I am mainly drawing from previous analyses in Tornquist, "Fighting for Democracy in the Philippines," and "Democracy and the Philippine Left," *op. cit.* -- based on observations and interviews plus first hand correspondence with Dante and Fatima Buscayno. I have also benefitted from Teresa Encarnacion, *The NGO as a Vehicle of Empowerment: the Buscayno Experiment*, draft-report within the Joint Philippine Dutch research project on Agrarian Issues in Central Luzon, (University of the Philippines, 1992).

reform and capitalism and that after Marcos there were many possibilities of working openly and legally. Much less is left of the previous anti-feudal and anti-authoritarian movement in Tarlac than in Bataan.

Moreover, Dante deliberately tried to make use of his contacts in Manila and Tarlac⁴ to get protection and money and rapidly build large scale cooperatives within various supplementary and, thus, less vulnerable sectors.

The old guerilla commander wanted a lot of things done rapidly, and believed that the shortest time possible should be spent on 'conscientization' and on the development of formalized participatory democracy. On the contrary, he expected the farmers to be economically motivated to work hard and then to develop in practice appropriate forms of cooperation. He himself and the core group would 'simply' guide and enlighten them and provide them with arms and ammunition in the form of a cooperative framework, tools, and credits, etc.

While formalized political 'education' and politics would therefore have to wait, a silent political strategy nevertheless persisted: when feudalism is no more and there is greater room for maneuver even when commercial capitalism is expanding, one must help the farmers work hard and fast to survive "under the existing relations of production." When the farmers themselves face the limits of the present setup and are confronted with hard opposition from powerful businessmen, politicians, and bureaucrats, they will then be able to develop the common political struggle. And then, but only then, will Dante be prepared to engage in open politics again. Back in 1990, he envisaged the need for further political democratization of various organs of the state by way of, among other things, elections in order to defend the freedom of action of cooperatives and get hold of sufficient resources.

Great risks were involved; success depended on a lot of factors - dependency upon contacts, money, Dante's personality and sort of guided democratic leadership, etc. But in 1990, he and his special companion were well aware of them and were able to analyze the factors just as deeply and critically as many suspicious scholars and activists whom I have talked with elsewhere.

Thus, we have new popular movements which, despite different contexts and varying basic perspectives, acknowledge the transformation of fundamental political and economic conditions due to the expansion of capitalism, more or less set aside revolutionary politics to conquer the state, give priority to 'empowerment' by way of fostering their own alternatives within 'civil society,' but also simultaneously finding more or less democratic

⁴Especially with Mrs. Aquino, and the mother of assassinated former Sen. Benigno Aquino, Dona Aurora Aquino.

organizing, management, and cooperation instrumental in building their alternatives.

The forms, however, differ. It is true that alternative projects require more or less undemocratically pre-fixed money and protection. But once these had been 'taken cared of,' there are two main patterns: the activists in Cebu and Bataan, on the one hand, stress time consuming education, 'conscientization,' and small scale projects with participatory democracy plus coalition building. Dante, on the other hand, relies more on guided democracy, practical experiences, and calculated interests on a large scale, in a deliberate attempt to rapidly prepare the ground for further politics of democratization, and thus, the possibility of removing the need for special funds and protection.

(2.) *Democratization of Politics*

We have to conclude that in the 1992 elections 'our' movements did not perform any better than the rest in transforming their acknowledged capacity to carry out democratic actions and alternative development work in 'civil society' into votes and influence within the political system. Neither of the two forms of democratic work proved successful in this respect.

However, when we follow more closely how this varied with the contexts, basic perspectives, and different forms of democratic work, a new promising tendency appears. As the movements continue their work in 'civil society,' they face certain structural changes and problems which, according to their reading, call for extended politics of democratization along two lines. First, the cases of Bataan and Cebu point to the direction of taking democratization beyond 'civil society.' Second, the experiences in Tarlac speak of a need to democratize existing attempts at linking alternative development work and political intervention.

(a) *Democratization beyond 'civil society'*

An initial problem, with a slight overstatement, is that in the face of the elections many radical NGOs and associated movements resembled, firstly, the Church in abstaining from active and open political involvement and, secondly, liberal educational societies in lacking wide popular support.

PRRM in Bataan⁶⁵ abstained from partisan involvement. Voter's education work was conducted only towards the end of the campaign. Further, only a few individuals took a few days off from partisan work.

⁶⁵Interviews in Manila and Bataan immediately before and after the elections with Ed de la Torre, Isagani Serrano, and Lisa Dacanay plus discussions with community organizers in Bataan.

The main explanation for what happened in Bataan was that the hunting season for progressive forces then had just passed and that the PRRM had to work with a wide spectrum of people and institutions. Of course, the sensitive question of funding was also relevant. To put it mildly, the much acclaimed independence of NGOs from the state and similar institutions should not be exaggerated in view of other dependency relationships. Many of the popular organizations supported by PRRM did not involve themselves because they were simply not strong enough, and because the situation is harsh, etc. But it remains to be seen if it was also due to problems traceable to their perspective, their ways of organizing people, and the type of problems they have to handle.

In Cebu, on the other hand, BISIG-associated NGOs were able to take a stand and do hard, and comparatively impressive, campaign work.⁴⁶ They lost the race but learned a lot. As elsewhere in the country, they could only get started at a late stage, particularly because of complicated negotiations with various progressive forces and the liberal coalition. They also managed to establish some cooperation with certain national democrats and progressive individuals. A local coalition campaigned for the liberal coalition candidates for the presidency and the senate, and the five city councilors of its own choice for northern Cebu. The BISIG-associated activists gave priority to election work in the urban poor areas where they were already involved in community organizing and self-help activities.

However, the rationale for concentrating on elections had not reached all BISIG activists. Thus, some of them did not contribute much. Also, despite the reasonably successful coalition work, BISIG-related people had to do most of the job. Moreover, they were not able to form local chapters of the electoral alliance in 'their' urban poor areas. It proved difficult to nominate candidates from bottom-up. Most popular organizations did not want to take a clear stand since this might cause disunity among the people that they worked with.

As the Cebu-activists themselves say, "the presumption that our urban poor mass organizations/people's organizations can be automatically converted into a political machinery is wrong."⁴⁷

⁴⁶I draw mainly from observations, interviews, and discussions done just before the 1992 election in Cebu City (and on the island of Pandanon where FORGE has initiated cooperatives among poor fisherfolks) with Ms. Gwen Ngolaban, Arman Alforque, and several organizers and election campaign workers of FORGE and CLEAR plus from documents referred to by them (supplemented by discussions before and after the elections with Ronald Llamas and other *Akbayan* campaign leaders, and with Karina Constantrino-David, central BISIG leader and senior community organizer and theoretician).

⁴⁷Correspondence with Ms. Ngolaban and on "Initial Evaluation of BISIG-Cebu's Electoral Involvement, May 17, 1992."

During the election campaign, senatorial candidate Florencio "Butch" Abad concluded that the NGOs were not able to take a stand; that separate vehicles should be formed.⁴⁸ This seems to be a general conclusion. In Bataan, the MPD is likely to set up a permanent apparatus. The activists in Cebu are asking for an electoral desk. At both places, the NGOs talk of the need to integrate voter's education in their daily work and in their various manuals.⁴⁹

In addition to these, the decentralization of state powers will also make it both necessary and possible for the new Left to engage in local politics. A lot of vital resources and powers will be devolved and the new arena cannot be avoided. NGOs will be represented in development planning and grassroots organizations will have a greater capacity to mobilize support for various political candidates. Moreover, it seems possible for the movements to make use of their basic perspectives in reading these changes and tackle them rather than just adjusting pragmatically.

Also, even if the NGOs and the popular organizations they service continue along the same line in 'empowering' people in 'civil society,' it might be safe to say that the very problems they face and the ways they now perceive them, almost force them to take more active part in the local political system and thereby in democratization beyond 'civil society.'

In the case of Bataan, the serious environmental degradation calls for integrated measures and cooperation. The PRRM has, in fact, already published analyses of this and started trading 'sustainable development programs' on the local political market. And if the new administration in Manila remains true to its promise to get rid of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, those involved in local work for 'sustainable development' will be served, on a silver platter, a unique possibility to connect with an important national issue.

In Cebu, the same thing is true with regards to the metropolitan development plan. Popular community organizations which do not want to turn partisan may have to relate their specific interests to such general problems. They may have to integrate these political considerations in their common local activities. Interestingly enough, progressive labor organizers also took active part in the Cebu campaign work.⁵⁰ Of course, most union activists, no matter how politically conscious they may be, concentrate on the daily struggles over wages, conditions of employment, and collective

⁴⁸Conversation with Florencio Abad, May 1, 1992.

⁴⁹For this and what follows in the next main paragraph, see also footnotes 45-47.

⁵⁰For what follows, see footnotes 45-47. I am also drawing from interviews and discussions with "Bong" Malonzo, leader of the National Federation for Labor (NFL), and Jurgette Honculade, also of the NFL, done April 28, 1992. Both are related to BLSIG.

agreements. At times, the campaign against strong capitalists and big companies might be more important than democratization, not to mention political elections.

But many other issues are becoming increasingly important. There is a need for political enforcement of minimum wages as well as the right to organize. And of course, Cebu's metropolitan development plan will eventually cause serious problems for many workers and their families living in threatened communities. In the 1992 elections, progressive unionists even gave priority to election-work together with community organizers in the urban poor residential areas.

Moreover, central leaders refer to a similar experiences in the plantation sector in the south when asked why it is that they find political democratization to be of great and immediate importance despite so many other problems which have to be attended to in order for them to survive. The answer is quite simple. Many plantations have been (or are about to be) abandoned by their masters. Moreover, in the forests there are simply no more trees left. Thus, workers themselves try to take over, form cooperatives, and reconstruct business. (There are also certain legal options of entering into cooperative arrangements where plantations are still profitable.) These, of course, presents the workers and unions with many new problems: from how to run the companies and mobilize credits to an interest in upholding law and order to protect their land and other assets. Now, these problems cannot be solved through their own democratic cooperation alone; they also clearly require public support. This support in turn will definitely not come unless the workers and unions themselves try to influence local as well as national politics.

The general indication is that decentralization of political powers, in addition to the increasingly important problems of environmental destruction, aggressive development plans, unemployment, housing, and of running worker's own cooperatives, etc., seem to make it instrumental even for unions or movements working with specific development projects to come together and engage themselves more in local politics. Democratization may thus be taken beyond 'civil society' to the state. The forms, however, will vary with the concrete settings, special problems, and distinct outlook of the movements.

(b) Democratizing linkages between development work and politics

In the case of Dante's cooperative efforts, the idea of taking democratization beyond 'civil society' to the state was built into the project itself. As we know, the silent political strategy of the late '80s was to help the farmers work hard and fast to improve their production and standard of

living under the limits of the system. Then, as the strategy goes, the people would be ready to engage in politics and face the businessmen and politicians, as these would be necessary to sustain their cooperative achievements.

So what happened? Did the basic analyses and calculations prove fruitful? Was the envisioned need for democratization cultivated among the people? And if not, why?⁵¹

As already mentioned, the first period was a tremendous success. The following series of growth pains also seemed possible to handle. However, handling the devastating eruption of Mount Pinatubo in mid-1991 which brought ashfall, lahar, and mudflows that destroyed harvests, fertile land, irrigation facilities was trickier.

The dynamism of Dante and his group in organizing people and resources to minimize destruction, provide relief, and to start reconstruction almost directly expanded their area of concern and influence in the province. In addition, President Aquino appointed Dante provincial chairman of the official task force. Soon enough these efficient and devoted activists began helping many of the tribal people (*Aetas*) of the Mount Pinatubo slopes to a new camp, to new houses and to find new means of livelihood. Business was attracted to provide new jobs for the people in the plains. A whole new town for the evacuees with residential areas, social services and industries was under way in early 1992 in the part of Tarlac where the US airforce base used to be. And when the former O'Donnell US powerplant – which could have provided the whole province with all the desperately needed extra electricity – was looted, office-holding local politicians did nothing and it was Dante who was asked by Malacañang to do something.

When the elections came up, Dante had of course been approached by various delegations. Would this not be the time for him to run for governor? Which local and national politicians would get his support?

Tarlac is the home province of the Aquinos as well as of factions of the Cojuangcos. One of them is headed by Corazon "Cory" Aquino (whose maiden name is Cojuangco) and her brother "Peping," while the other is led by "Danding" Cojuangco, 1992 presidential candidate and Marcos' favorite

⁵¹ I draw mainly from observations plus first hand interviews and discussions with Dante Buscayno and special assistant Fatima Buscayno, Boy Palad, vice-mayorality candidate of the Capas coalition sponsored by the cooperative; Meg Feliciano, head of the O'Donnell resettlement camp and councilor candidate in Conception, and some other leaders and workers within the cooperative. I am also thankful for discussions with Prof. Cynthia Bautista, who has planned research and done close observations in Tarlac just after the Mount Pinatubo eruption, Asst. Prof. Teresa Encarnacion, who has spent several months with the cooperative collecting information for the previously mentioned report, "The NGO as a Vehicle for Empowerment: the Buscayno Experiment" (which has been most useful in my attempts at learning more about the farmer's debt problems and the critique of Dante's style of leadership), and Prof. Randolph David, discussant of a drafted version of this research report presented in the University of the Philippines in late April 1992.

business crony. While maintaining his independence, Dante is naturally friendly with Cory and Pepings' camp. To survive in Tarlac, one has to take a stand. In 1992, however, the latter faction was also divided. Peping backed Ramon Mitra for the presidency, while Cory backed Fidel Ramos. This time Dante stood up against his lady patron. He refused to support Ramos who had sent him to prison during the struggle against Marcos and concluded that Mitra's and Peping's flock was the only realistic option. After Cory asked him to at least abstain from getting himself involved, and after realizing the enormous financial resources of Danding, Dante concluded that this would not be the right time for him to run for a position.

On the local level, however, Dante and the core group of cooperative and task-force leaders could not remain politically neutral as the local politicians sabotaged their efforts to provide relief and do reconstruction work. At a late stage, a local progressive coalition for mayor, vice-mayor, and councilors was formed in Capas, the foremost homebase of the cooperative efforts and quite near the large emergency and resettlement camps for the Mount Pinatubo refugees. Dante did not run himself, but he campaigned actively and openly for the cooperative leaders and people involved in the Mount Pinatubo task force coalition.

Did the coalition win a landslide victory? No, it lost - in Dante's heartland. What went wrong?

Various forms of cheating and dirty tricks explain the defeat. Some people were prevented from casting their vote; massive vote-buying took place towards the end of the campaign; poll watchers were bought off; outright rigging of the results was common, and so on. It was no surprise that all these would be attempted; the question was whether these would succeed. The coalition knew it had to get a clear majority in order not to be cheated in the final process of counting. So, the question is rather why there was no overwhelming support for the coalition and why people did not resist the rigging.

Factors such as a late start, a not so popular mayoralty candidate, and the fact that people did not have to offend Dante by not voting for the coalition (since *he* did not run) hardly explain much. Most people knew the important basic differences between the blocks and the fact that Dante was behind the coalition. And given the strength of the cooperatives and the task force, fear of losing protection from traditional politicians and their sponsors can hardly have been decisive.

We probably have to turn the problem around. People may not have at all identified their well-being with the fate of the coalition, and thus to the efforts of the cooperative and the task force. Further, perhaps *Dante and the cooperative projects* were not popular anymore.

Actually, some reports and informants - including Dante himself - speak much about sentiments that while Dante has become a big shot, commands a lot of resources, and says he is there to help them, he claims back loans from them even when they are in trouble, and makes all decisions on his own, some of which are wrong.

What is behind this? Let us consider a few processes at work.

The cooperative works in the following manner. Farmers would get loans and various forms of support to be able to increase their production. Then they would deliver their harvests, get help with storing, processing, and marketing (to further increase their income) and meanwhile get good pay - minus, of course, their loans.

However, a major problem is that this chain has been easy to get around. Thus, it has been possible to avoid paying the loans, and for Dante and his staff the question is then how to get these back. The elected farmer's leaders claim that they do not have the time to do the job. They probably do not want to do it either. Thus, people from Dante's staff had to be sent out, most of whom were young female professionals, and occasionally even Dante himself does the collecting.

Some indebted farmers say they cannot pay and that they find the 'collectors,' and even Dante, hard-hearted. Even though he helps people in trouble, he still does not resemble a traditional 'kind patron' who seems to care for his subjects by employing efficient and forceful collectors to do the dirty job he considers below his dignity.

The farmers may even have used the money for other purposes and in the process taken other loans from private businessmen which have to be paid back first, since the terms of the loan are more onerous than Dante's. Further, how can the farmers ever return the cooperative loans if they do not receive new ones from the cooperative?

The situation was worsened by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. Thereafter, farmers took it for granted that the government would grant massive debt relief; but this never came. Why, they ask, could not Dante solve this? Was he not appointed by the President as head of the task force?

Moreover, how would it be possible for Dante to decentralize decision-making when all these problems were pressing and when he kept to the idea of working fast and guiding people? Problems of inefficiency were already there not only because of hidden resistance but also because some employees did not know how their own tasks fitted into others', and did not dare or want others to take dynamic initiatives on their own. When Dante, therefore, tried to speed up the process of turning parts of the NGO ventures into full-scale cooperatives, those who were offered the chance to buy shares were rarely interested in taking the risks involved.

Finally, it was not even easy to handle the cooperative shops which were established to reach out to the local market, bypass middlemen, and sell products as cheap as possible to the common people. Moreover, many households include not only farmers but also petty traders who of course find it difficult to compete with the cooperative shops.

In other words, Dante's grand strategy did not work. While Dante supported an electoral coalition to get rid of some of the obstacles, most of those expected to realize all these problems and vote in favor of change did not do so. Moreover, the local oligarchy caused serious problems for the cooperative efforts in general and for the attempt at efficient relief and reconstruction work after the Mount Pinatubo eruption in particular.

Two factors stand out as very important.

First, Dante's assumption that he was associating with farmers whose main interest was to work hard on their land, who step by step would realize that cooperation was favorable, and who would then defend those options if they were threatened proved wrong. On the contrary, most farmers are part of households where they themselves and other members are involved in many other different activities and ways of surviving. Their decisions thus are not guided only by the deterministic rationale that Dante took for granted. For instance, younger family members who are not involved in farming may find it more sensible to use cooperative production loans for other purposes than those intended.

Second, many people initially experienced the positive effects of cooperating, but mainly under the firm leadership and successful fund-raising of Dante rather than on their own. In addition, there were few possibilities for them to directly realize the negative effects of breaking the rules of the cooperative game. Thus, many were alienated, did not identify themselves with all the cooperative initiatives, asked instead for more money, turned angry when they did not get it or had to start paying back their debts, and were not particularly enthusiastic when asked to endorse or even defend it all in the elections.

The deterministic assumptions about farmers' interests and their likely ways of acting, as well as Dante's 'guided democracy,' have thus been insufficient (and at times even counterproductive) in helping the activists exhaust rapidly possibilities within the established system to pave the way for radical politics of democratization.

Now, in what direction does all these take Dante and the other leading persons involved? Basically towards, firstly, the need for an even broader mix of projects to engage those other than the outright farmers, and, secondly, towards more democratic participation *and* responsibility within the different projects.

Dante now agrees that there is no unified peasantry that can be organized and led like an army (even a common visible enemy is lacking.) But he emphasizes that relations within the movement must be both harsh and fair. Farmers themselves should take responsibility for collecting loans via their elected leaders and not young female employees who could rather serve as their assistants. Everybody has to experience directly – or if that is not possible, constantly be informed of – the effects of what they and the others are doing and the difficulties caused by the politicians and bureaucrats that they have voted into office.

Finally, Dante concludes, that he will probably have to speak up more in public even though we now have to live for another period with unscrupulous traditional politicians who already do their utmost to exploit the decentralization of state powers.

Generally speaking, the bad experiences may lead to further democratization of the attempts to link alternative development work with political intervention. But how this will actually come about remains of course to be followed up in future studies.

To Sum Up...

More than six years after the peaceful 'people power revolution,' the Philippine polity remains almost a caricature of the personality-oriented American settler-democracy adapted to and taken advantaged of by feudal-like bosses. But the full scale elections of May 1992 also indicate that old structures are actually falling apart, though new solid forms fail to appear, including reasonably clear-cut representation of different interests and ideas of societal change. One of the main problems is, thus, that the widely esteemed new middle class democratization still lacks solid foundation in movements (1.) with genuine roots among the people, (2.) that stands up for different interests and ideas, and (3.) keeps track of their political representatives.

But how will the new born Philippine democracy be able to gain a similar dynamic in a former colony where capitalism expands (but not on the basis of far-reaching bourgeois and industrial revolutions) and where the traditional Third World view among radical popular movements has been not to bet on political democratization?

The serious crisis of the still dominating traditional Left group opens up the arena for fresh alternatives and contributes toward more democratic forms of cooperation within the Left as a whole. A broad front was not possible in the face of the 1992 elections, but rethinking 'soft' sections of the Left, nevertheless, came together. While pragmatic reasons were there (and

some spoke of tactics, while waiting for an insurrection), a new strategic view of democratization and electoral participation was in the making. It is true that the 'soft Left' still claims that the important sources of power are outside the state, and thus not subject to political competition, but intervention is possible by way of unionism, development activism, pressure politics, etc. These were supplemented by an attempt at using people's trust in radical anti-parliamentary work to mobilize votes for progressive political representatives.

The immediate results were meager but will hardly cause the new Left to give up its democratic orientation. On the contrary, in the face of the new LGC, the new Left is currently modifying its basic perspectives, stressing the vital importance of intervening in local politics, including elections. A lot of resources will be allocated to local politicians and bureaucrats. The LGC provides for NGO representation in development councils and therefore makes the local political arena crucial. As a consequence, grassroots organizations will be better equipped to intervene in local politics and assert more pressure upon local elective officials.

The 1992 elections indicated, however, that the capacity of the new Left to carry out actions and alternative development work could not be transformed into votes through temporary electoral alliances and machinery. Either it will have to expand on the US model of pressure politics, lobbying, and temporary alliances behind as progressive personalities as possible, or try to transform the system from within. But while the latter is preferable, compiling ideas and pooling resources has proved insufficient. Since the whole is more than the sum of its parts the problem is, thus, if general political questions can be combined with the daily work and separate single issues so that people and various movements can place special interests within a total perspective (and generate a political party) well ahead of elections.

Are there any signs of growth of radical popular movements that consider democratization essential in trying to work out and implement a new political development project? Two major tendencies seem to be at work among the cases studied - one in the direction of *democratic 'empowerment'*, another in the direction of *democratization of politics*.

1.) 'Our' movements are active in quite different contexts. Even their basic Marxist oriented perspectives vary in many ways. Still, two factors are common and possibly explain much of their new democratic orientation. As against the traditional Left, they all argue that the expansion of capitalism (plus, of course, the fall of Marcos) has caused fundamental political and economic changes in their respective areas. These has then caused them to set aside much of the old revolutionary politics of conquering the state in favor of building their own development alternatives within 'civil society' and

thus 'empowering' the people. Of course, good contracts, protection, access to international funds, etc., have been important in getting these projects off-ground. The most interesting thing is that *democratic organizing, management, and cooperation have so far tended to be instrumental in building these alternatives.*

There seem to be two different models on how to go about these. On one hand, time consuming education, 'conscientization,' and small-scale projects with participatory democracy supplemented by coalition building, and on the other hand, democratic guidance of large projects based on calculated interests and practical experiences to rapidly prepare the ground for further politics of democratization.

2.) While neither of these models proved successful in transforming democratic 'empowerment' into votes during the recent elections, another promising tendency seems to be under way: *In carrying out their work in 'civil society' the movements face certain structural constraints which vary with the specific contexts, but according to the movements' own reading, call for different forms of extended politics of democratization.*

Democratization may be taken beyond 'civil society' to the state. Even unions or movements working with specific development projects find it instrumental to join forces and seriously get into local politics in the face of the decentralization of political powers, and problems which must be handled on a general level like environmental destruction, aggressive development plans, unemployment, housing, the running of workers' own cooperatives, etc.

Already existing attempts at linking development work and political interventions may be democratized. While most of the people involved have no clear-cut material interests that can be taken for granted, an alternative is to get to know, and preferably experience, the effects of how they and others act within the development project, as well as the consequences of the actions of elective politicians on the projects.

What can actually come out of these tendencies now remains to be followed up in future studies.