

Rural Development and Social participation: an exploratory study on Mexico and the Philippines

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Addressing the Theme: Marginalization and Exclusion: The Hemisphere's
Number One Problem

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I. Introduction

This paper draws an explorative study about social participation related to Rural Development in Mexico and the Philippines. It covers some issues that were undertaken during the decade of the nineties; time that mayor reforms succeeded in these countries. However, in this paper it is made a historical analysis in order to understand this participation, and find out how these civil organizations started to “speak up”, if they have had an umbrella organization, and if they build networks.

One of the major issues on the long run is to find out how the explosion of grassroots participation in civil society, people organizations and non-governmental organizations are engaged on rural development.

Therefore, the long-term goal is to analyze how peasants have been represented on this “new organizations”, and how they will benefit by the participation of this Civil Society

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Organizations on the Public Arena. Short-term goal is to analyze how important is to address comparative studies on this topic. Additionally to identify how organizations from the civil society are responding to this new area under discussion.

II. Framework

During the past years, issues of rural development such as agrarian reform, land security, etc. as well as social participation have been studied separate, and in this report I try to make an analysis of how these topics are interweaved. The importance of comparative studies is to look into major studies on these topics, basically to find out what is going on, how these changes will affect peasant communities, as well as the whole economy system. On the other hand, there are some researchers who are pushing to start empirical analysis, because with them, they will be able to observe the benefits that rural development offers and how the people responds.

In Latin America as well as in the Pacific Basin area the agrarian sector as well as social participation have been considered important topics to analyze. Most of the governments have recognized the "market" (FAO 1997) as the most effective instrument to achieve development. Therefore, market is seen as a vehicle to reduce land distribution inequality, and social tension. However, in order to reach rural development, planners must propose an integral reform where peasants, politicians, etc. participate.

Peasants from all over the world have played an important role on aspects of social participation, basically when they get organized looking forward to perceive that their demands were listen. Some authors, such as Katie Smith (1994), have pointed out that social participation has been incorporated into the agenda of rural development

programs. Some of them are the non governmental organizations, that have included topics on policy analysis and technology transfer, information technology and development, civil society democracy and governance, economic growth, poverty reduction and development.

NGOs can be understood for this analysis as "a private, non profit, professional organizations with a distinctive legal character, concerned with public welfare goals" (Clarke 1998: 2-3). Non-governmental organizations have become a more visible social actor and part of the local political economy. In countries like Colombia, Peru, Mexico, the Philippines and India, NGOs, started to obtain new spaces of expression. History has shown that Mexico and the Philippines have long tradition of civil society organizations. Even before the end of the Spanish colonialism, there were some forms of citizen association engaging in a variety of cultural based initiatives. This tradition has manifested itself in different ways throughout the last century, and was especially important during crucial periods such as the revolutions. However, Mexican NGOs are younger and weaker than the Philippines NGOs, that have long tradition. In the Philippines civil society organizations are just beginning to realize the potential of cultural power in contradiction to the political power held by the state and the economic power held by the private sector.

Since the 1986 revolution that ended 20 years of authoritarian rule under Ferdinand Marcos, give the space for citizen participation to expand greatly. For instance, in the rural area, NGOs, offer a new way to understand rural development outside the governmental institutions. In some countries from Latin America and East Asia it started

to be the institutional environment in which the State and the local NGOs will start to collaborate in some programs. NGOs are using a method of participation and mobilization that is responding to some demands from the civil society that the government itself is not doing.

The case study that is proposed in this paper is fascinating. The Pacific Basin region is well known by its great cultural, economical and socio-political diversity that makes it a great reason to study. To support this idea, Gereffi (1994) pointed out that under the theories of development, the experiences that countries from East Asia and Latin America can bring are enormous, because in this region regularization of land programs as land reform have been promoted and social participation took an interesting role. Twofold aspects are recognized to do this study. First, it is interesting to study Mexico and the Philippines since both countries have in common two basic things: a). Historical, both countries were colonized by the Spanish; b). Geographical, they have a common border: the Pacific Ocean. Second, this geographical area is rich on possibilities to do a comparative study; in this region are interchangeable experiences that will bring a better spectrum on economical development, as well as, on the booming area of the civil society in the process of organizing themselves.

I believe that the richness of this study brings important lessons to the understanding of social participation on the rural sector. On the other hand, I believe that this type of studies contribute to some of the goals of APEC, that is working toward to intensifying development cooperation in the region; to improve the economic and social well-being of the people; and to deepen the spirit of community in the Asia Pacific. So, with this

particular study, I am looking forward to identify if this cooperation exists, particularly on the case of rural development.

As for the methodology, I divided this study into two areas. First, to explore through bibliographical revision from the selected countries, and second, to try to build a link between rural policies and peasant organizations, as well as to understand the emergence of new social actors.

In order to start with this exploration of literature, I visited some universities looking for materials: Universidad de Colima, El Colegio de México, Universidad de Chapingo and Colegio de Postgraduados and some others in Mexico. Outside Mexico, I traveled to Tulane University in New Orleans, LA where I visited the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, I did research and visited web pages of World Bank, United States Library Congress, and The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

I also conducted an unstructured interview with Mexican scholars who are working in issues of civil society and land reform. Also, I wrote to some NGOs leaders from The Philippines to get information about their organization.

III. Findings

Assessments of the Mexican and the Philippine agrarian reform are numerous; in this region of the world, agrarian reform and social participation, are the topics that have been most intensely discussed and debated. In Asia, we can find the majority of the rural population. In Latin America, we can find a greater inequality in income distribution as in land tenure.

Handelman 1981:4). We might not want to romanticize with this idea, however, if we look at the past we observe how some case studies demonstrated that peasant mobilizations were based over issues of land and the agrarian economy. Latin American countries as well as the Philippines have in common the colonial period, when the Spanish established their property regimes, which are grounded in the Roman law type of civil law. Later on, during the Independency War, some of their petitions converge around a key feature: Land tenure.

Mexico and the Philippines, as other countries, which have engaged in the land reform process, have discovered that productive and economic sustainability do not depend solely on access to land. It is important to create an integral reform that will consider key elements: historical, cultural, economical, social, etc.

Empirical studies are important because they give us a better understanding of the impact of these programs. For example, Feder et al. (1988) have found a positive link between land registration and improved access to credit in rural Thailand. They also found that registration programs led to higher land values in countries like Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Honduras, Brazil and Peru; however other empirical studies have found that land registration does not have any link between investment and land productivity (Might-Adholla et al., 1991; Carter et al., 1991; Roth et al., 1994; and Place and Might-Adholla, 1998). Other studies in Mexico have found that land registration improved

cadastral system, recognized some property rights, however they have not improved on the short run land market (Preciado 1998).

HISTORICAL ROOTS: THE PHILIPPINES AND MEXICO

Both countries have shown major social actors try to get security of tenure. Social inequalities were the political roots on both countries, leading to the overthrow of the ruling oligarchy. However, the ones who gained control were the ones who dictated the policies, and they kept their position.

I am presenting a historical revision, that does not try to be in depth, but it will show how the Mexican and the Filipino history is rich in peasant mobilizations, where the main element was the land.

In both countries, peasants have manifested against land tenure system. In the early colonial period the encomienda system was the first instrument of control used by Spanish. Encomenderos were empowered to collect tribute from residents of their domain. Indigenous people from New Spain (Mexico) and the Philippines had their own land tenure system, Ejido for Mexico and Barangay in the Philippines. Colonial authorities tried to integrate the Ejidos as well as the Barangays into the Spanish administrative structure in order to attract native chiefs and their followers into their settlements. These encomiendas were devoted in Mexico mainly to corn cultivation, and in the Philippines to rice cultivation. Because of distribution of land, in the Philippines peasants in areas surrounding the encomiendas (people from the independent barangay¹ communities) started a major agrarian reform in 1745, trying to finish the encomienda system.

Eventually, this system disappeared but this did not mean the end of abuses. Goodno (1991) stated that in the 18th and 19th centuries peasants as well as some intellectuals led social transformation.

Philippine historiography brought to light that it did not develop as a unitary colonial economy, instead, the archipelago emerged as a series of separate societies that entered the world economic system at different times, under different terms of trade, and with different systems of production.

In the twenty-century still lives the social mobilization and peasant rebellion. In the Filipino Case, Riedinger (1995) describes how the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and its filial the New People Army (NPA) in the 70s and 80s showed that geographic and cultural barriers to collective act among a differentiated Philippines peasantry could be surmounted. Riedinger also say "the success of the CPP/NPA also gave new impetus to the democratic opposition and heightened the urgency accorded to the ouster of the Marcos regime and the introduction of meaningful agrarian reform" (Riedinger 1995:13)

Supporting this point, peasant organizations have been strongly linked to Non-governmental organizations in Philippines, although NGOs have traditionally "faced an extremely difficult political context for their activities" (Micalat-Teves and Lewis 1997:229). As an example of this association in 1919 was the National Union Peasants that addressed problems faced by the group that they represent and forced the State to bring solution to them. Another examples of this was the Huk Rebellion (1930-1950) as other peasant

¹ Barangay: Pre-hispanic social unit of 30 to 100 families owing allegiance to one chief. Under the Spanish, each municipality (pueblo) was divided into tax collection units called barangay that did not necessarily

groups organized during the 1950s that were created to alleviate countryside poverty and bring land security such as the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), Federation of Free Workers (FFW), the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), and others, some of them were supported by the Catholic Church that gave a powerful new idiom to peasant organizations, that even cut across regional and linguistic differences. The Philippine Church, as well as in Mexico (and other Latin American countries), after Vatican II, developed a greater social awareness and adopted a more activist role in the struggle for social justice. Christian communities from the Liberation Theology from Latin America had a strong influence in the Philippines, which redefined the concept of community, stressed the biblical importance of social justice and the need of united action among the disadvantaged.

Riker (1995) and Putzel (1998) describe that the emergence of NGOs in the Philippines, especially in the rural sector, have multiplied (as well as in other parts of the world) as a recognition that the State and the private sector have not the capacity to respond to the rural poor. Putzel, identify six basic elements in this emergence:

- Market and state failure in the agriculture; in this sense NGOs emerged as a response to market imperfections and inadequate private and public sector investment in agriculture and rural development. Therefore, NGOs started to develop projects with the express purpose of alleviate rural poverty and fill the gaps created by private and public sector.
- Inadequacy of state and political organizations as representatives of the rural poor, because not only the state failed to provide services also its programs came to be

coincide with local residential units, barrios.

perceived “biased toward the rich and riddled with corruption and inefficiency” (Putzel 1998: 82); and the NGOs offered a more “participatory models of development in contrast to the top-heavy state centered models of the past” (Putzel 1998: 84);

- Limitations of People’s organizations (POs), mainly because of the lack of skilled members as the capacity of decision making to represent their member’s interests adequately.
- Development of citizenship, new social space was opened for individuals beyond the family and traditional village relationships where a notion of people as individual citizens began to take hold, as well as the capacity of decision making. (Putzel 1998);
- Availability of funds, the rapid expansion of NGOs was due in large measure to the availability of funds from government and non-government sectors. And
- Support for NGOs from state, elite and political organizations (across the right-left spectrum). NGOs have been involved in the promotion of rural development in the Philippines since 1950s, when the state endorsed this function to the PRRM.

As Clarke (1998), Silliman and Garner (1998) and other mentioned that Filipinos have a strong history of rural-based rebellion against the state, and engaged in “everyday” forms of resistance against the unjust actions of those more wealthy and powerful. However, rural development NGOs proliferated during the early and mid- 1950s, stimulated in large part by government legislation and financial support. In the 1960s NGOs continued to grow, the Marcos regime marginalized them as a result of the declaration of martial law,

“but after 1975 a new generation of NGOs emerged, stimulated by rising rural poverty and political marginalisation ... Under authoritarian regime however, new NGOs worked closely with grassroots 'people's organization' and eschewed collaboration with the state to varying degrees... *However* most NGOs were bitterly opposed to the Marcos regime” (Clarke 1998: 67).

Mexico, on the other hand, the story was not so different, most of the movements before and after 1910 are related to land inequality. Prior to 1910, 97 percent of the land was owned by 1 percent of the population. Before the Revolution, under the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1910), peasant communities were deprived of most of their land by a small class of landowners. The twenty-century started with the first major revolution, peasant leaders played a protagonist role, Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Villa, and however, intellectuals and leaders from the urban areas also participated in this social movement. This movement was a constant expression of removing the tendency of favors to just a few. As a result of this movement was the integration of Constitution of 1917, Article 27. Social organizations have presented along the history, and they have developed their own way of expression, responding to issues that have affected their conditions of living, such as poverty, health, education, land.

Clearly, Mexican Revolution was a political arena where those social actors (peasants, intellectuals, women) who participated as part-time soldiers and as farmers (going to their fields during planting season). Alliances with intellectuals have been crucial in most of the social movements that have happened around the world.

In Mexico we have observed two critical junctures, in 1910 the revolution started as a synonymous of deprivation, in 1994, the uprising of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) that reconfirmed the effervescence in rural Mexico. In this century new dimensions of struggle have been added to land demand: market, production, self-management, autonomy, training and education.

Otero (1989) pointed out how the existence of the peasantry has been prolonged for several decades. This had as a result advanced discussions around agrarian issues in Mexico as well as in other countries (Chile, Bolivia, the Philippines, etc.). Otero (1989) also said how other countries have generally turned to the Mexican debate for theoretical inspiration in analyzing agrarian classes and political processes in various countries.

Hernández and Fox (1992) analyzed how Mexico has produced a wide range of popular movements since the beginning of the twentieth century and the linkages between intellectuals and social movements. They have found how intellectuals and popular sectors followed five main paths that included the universities, government rural-development programs, "organic intellectuals", bridging different movements, political parties and protoparties, and NGOs. As an example of the third path, rural teachers played a strategic role in supporting and leading local peasant movement, linking them to one another and supporting them to "scale up". An example of the fifth path, it is the role of NGOs, mainly the Catholic Church, which directly or indirectly managed many welfare and educational institutions: credit unions, popular education, food distribution, attending health and urban problems. The Catholic Church helped to mushroom a lot of NGOs, basically after the spread of liberation theology and the emergence of the Christian

base communities. On the other side, grassroots movements of the social left also promote the expansion of NGOs. In 1980s, NGOs more secular, technical and politically oriented began to set up.

NGOs and the rural development have presented according to Hernández and Fox (1992) two main tendencies: a). traditional and religious oriented, and b). looking to increase economical level, especially in the areas of credit, marketing, and technical assistance. Mexican NGOs have a long way to go before accomplish their institutional life, have a strong political impact, or have social presence as their counterparts in the Philippines, how ever, there are a notable exceptions. One of the major obstacles is the omnipresent role of the state. While NGOs are the key actors to the rear in the Philippines as well as other Latin American countries, in Mexico, government agencies continue to play a leading role. However, this scenario could change, since NGOs could be the bridge between political and social change.

Another reason or weakness is their limited access to external funding, even though many European and North American NGOs have supported some of the Mexican NGOs. Other reason could be internal factors, significant NGOs have dedicated their work in welfare activities or into popular, education projects; they are disconnected from the main lines of social movements.

Overall, the relation between NGOs and the State is one of mutual distrust. Mexican State might perceive NGOs as rivals because they might steal their clientele by assisting the poor outside the state's clientele channels. On the other hand, NGOs link government with control. However, the government after the crisis in the 1980s and 1990s has

opened up spaces in the social and political scene for organizations outside the government, including NGOs.

Filipino and Mexican history have a lot of things in common, rebellions, social movements, peasants as main actors, they are also have common history, the coconut production, the use of this product in they cuisine, and other things that it was not explore in this paper.

IV. Conclusion

Non-governmental organizations have played a significant role in the politics of these two countries. They have become significant political actors in civil society in Mexico and in the Philippines. As a central topic in this analysis, we agree with the mainstream literature that assumes that NGOs proliferation strengthens civil society.

Voluntary rural people's organizations, such as community associations, cooperatives, farmers' organizations and informal groups as well as their inter-linked networks are essential mechanisms for facilitating this cooperation. While these institutions and traditions have played a key role.

Full recognition of the inherent advantages of using more participatory self-help organization approaches in mobilizing rural communities for sustainable agriculture and rural development is an essential first step. Many key decision-makers still need to be informed about and convinced of the economic and political benefits that flow from enhanced people's participation in development programs and projects.

Increasing global economic competition, declining foreign aid and state subsidy flows have put new pressures on governments to reduce the level and improve the cost-efficiency of public services. Rural populations of many developing countries have been

particularly hard pressed by these trends. This is because they tend to be politically and geographically more isolated and less socially organized than their urban counterparts and are rarely consulted in the formulation of agricultural and rural development policies. However, this trend could change, most NGOs are continuing to work with this social actors, strengthening networks with other NGOs that impact in different levels: local, regional, national and/or internationally.

Rural populations as a result of understanding development through market could have a negative affect with some of the structural adjustment programs and could continue to cut in rural development programs and extension services, a rapid disintegration of rural institutions, organizations and physical infrastructures and a sharp decline in marketed food production which has led to increased frustrations in many countries. So, it will be important to continue promoting rural people's participation but not through traditional organs of local government or other formal organizations, such as cooperatives, as they frequently do so in a "top-down" fashion or function freely as a farmer-owned and controlled self-help organization designed to meet farmer-identified needs.

NGOs are seen by some as essential social mechanisms for achieving complex sustainable development objectives and ensuring social harmony.

Genuine rural people's participation flourishes only where policy and legal conditions enable it to do so. While most low and middle-income governments voice strong public support for democratic principles of government and for public participation in decision-making, the policies and laws of many often do not reflect that position. In some countries, laws still severely limit the right of rural people to organize themselves to

pursue their self-help interests or, in other cases, allow them to do so only "under the guidance" of government or party officials. Nonetheless, the trend towards increased economic and political liberalization, has led to increased public pressure to reform outdated policies and laws that limit these participation rights.

One of the most notable trends in recent years has been the explosive growth of donor-supported "development NGOs" in LDCs, which often promote the establishment of rural people's organizations at grassroots level, but are not considered as belonging to that category. United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) records currently list over 1 400 development NGOs (mostly network NGOs) as being registered with UN agencies. Unfortunately, because of the rapid increase in the number of these organizations in recent years, no accurate figures exist on the total number of these NGOs worldwide, though some estimate the number to be now in excess of 500,000 (UNDESA 1999).

Since many rural development NGOs face common problems in accessing donor funds, undertaking large projects and influencing governments, they are increasingly beginning to establish their own support network organizations at national, regional and international levels. While most NGO networks were traditionally based in developed countries, rural development NGOs are increasingly setting up their headquarters in developing countries.

With the continuing decline in budgets and donor funding, governments and NGOs are now discovering the mutual benefits of "partnering" and dialoguing on issues of common interest and concern. Rural people's organizations, such as cooperatives and RWOs, who

have at different times received support from both government and NGOs, are also entering into the dialogue process. In short, the scope for increased dialogue between these three groups appears to be growing. Notable in this area of promoting increased dialogue between NGOs and government on policy and rural development issues have been ANGO and PHILDHRRRA (Philippine Partnership for Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas) in the Philippines (UNDESA 1999).

This analysis in social participation and rural development found that peasant mobilization and participation are key elements in the formation of NGOs or other organizations from civil society. However, there is still not too much information about it. Presence of NGOs gives to these countries a new way to understand rural development and other forms of negotiation with the State. This phenomenon is occurring in Latin American as in Pacific-Asia peasant communities. These participatory groups are trying to accomplish a sustainable development, formulating strategies that respond to particular needs.

As this paper points out, NGOs are representing an alternative to induce rural development. This type of organisms have contributed not only with the promotion of certain activities, they have given an answer to local needs, and participate in directly social policies.

In general, it identified how the work that this organization has done is not easy, that they did not appear recently, they have been working for a long time. A lot of citizens have participated in this process to build a civil society that can speak up.

In summary, NGOs are intermediary organizations between the citizenship and the state. They count with human, technical, and financial resources to achieve most of their goals.

Everyday this form of organization is rising, and has more presence into the political arena, that shares with other institutions. Their participation is well known, and seen as an option of resolving some basic problems that the state has not been able to resolve. It is uncertain to say at this moment, that in the future NGOs will be in-charge of providing the social development of every country. However, NGOs are an instrument of negotiation with the State and they are used as instruments of social control.

Nevertheless, the space that NGOs have conquered could be reversible if they do not continue to work.

So many questions still without an answer, which gives the opportunity to continue working in this topic.

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