



WALK: Framing a Successful Agrarian Reform Campaign in the Philippines¹

Lennart Niemelä

In 2007, farmers from Sumilao in the Mindanao province of Bukidnon walked 1700 km from their homes to the capital, Manila, in an attempt to win back the 144 hectares of land that should have been distributed to them via the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Not only were they successful, but their victory was perceived as a landmark event by the people in the agrarian reform movement. *The Sumilao Walk* affected how later campaigns were organized, in particular the likewise successful 2009 national CARPER (CARP Extension with Reforms) campaign. This study aims at understanding the processes behind the mobilization strategies that formed the basis of an ultimately successful campaign. Collective action frame theory constitutes the theoretical framework. The Sumilao farmers' campaign conclusively led to two important outcomes. It strengthened horizontal relationships in civil society between agrarian reform SMOs and increased cooperation between the agrarian reform movement and the Catholic Church, facilitated by a shared non-violence methodology.

Keywords: agrarian reform, social movement organizations, and collective action frame theory, active nonviolence

“Walking long distances is a high form of struggle.”
– Risa Hontiveros

INTRODUCTION

Agrarian reform has been a long standing issue in the Philippines and has brought about many political and socio-economic problems, for instance, landlessness, an unequal distribution of property and power, bureaucratic

inefficiency, and corruption in various state institutions (see Putzel 1992: xxii).

It is argued that the Philippines is a difficult setting for the implementation of agrarian reform because of the merging of continuing patterns of inequality with democratic institutions (Riedinger 1995: 15). According to Martin (1999: 188, 201), the US colonial policy resulted in dual principles, where land entitlements were coupled with “safeguards which protected claimants of prior property interests,” which is inherent in all subsequent attempts at land reform and thus continues to haunt agrarian policymaking. According to a study² by Shin & Wells (2005: 93), although democracy is preferred at regime level, preference for democratic process is remarkably low: 75 percent for democratic regime and 48 percent for democratic process,³ respectively. This divergence is related to a low average level of freedom and a high average level of corruption⁴ (ibid: 98-99). Democratization in the Philippines appears to be problematic as the state has been characterized in studies as an elite democracy, cacique democracy, weak state, oligarchic democracy, low-intensity democracy, patrimonial oligarchic state and clientelist electoral regime (Quimpo 2008: 21-22).

Agrarian reform addresses problems of poverty alleviation and national economic development, but also, by definition involves a redistribution of not only land, but political power (Putzel 1992: xx; Riedinger 1995: 2). Riedinger (1995: 15) argues that political liberalization by itself will not bring about agrarian reform, but it makes government more responsive to reformist pressures.

[C]ertainly for AKBAYAN, and for me as a member of AKBAYAN, agrarian reform is very, very much about democratization, not just economically empowering the rural sectors, politically empowering them as well to be able not only to shape, influence and select policies and make their leaders accountable, but to exert political power themselves directly through their organizations or through their leaders who enter the electoral arena[...] It's also democratization in terms of shaping a democratic culture for citizens in the rural area as well, where the worst poverty conditions are seen in the Philippines.

- R. Hontiveros 2009, interview, 27 February -

Following the installation of a new regime under President Corazon Aquino after the ouster of Marcos in 1986, the 1987 Philippine Constitution, mandated that an agrarian reform program be undertaken by the State. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) enacted in 1988, which is

based on the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL or RA 6657) is a continuous program that would not end until its goals are reached. This was reiterated in the Department of Justice (DOJ) Opinion 9, Series of 1997. The funding for the program has been given budgets for 10-year periods since 1988. However, when the funding ended in June 2008 and was only extended with a six-month period, it caused worry for a paradoxical situation: "Ending the implementation of CARP without completing the acquisition and distribution of lands covered by the program will result in the anomalous situation of having persons owning landholdings in excess of the allowable retention limit under the law" (PEASANTech 2008).

In 2007, farmers from Sumilao in the Mindanao province of Bukidnon walked 1,700 kilometers from their homes to the capital, Manila, in an attempt to win back the 144 hectares of land that should have been distributed to them via CARP. As expressed in informal talks and interviews with informants, not only were they successful, their victory was perceived as a landmark event by the people in the agrarian reform movement.

THEORY AND METHOD

Designed as a case study of the Sumilao farmers' campaign, this study aims to understand the processes behind the mobilization strategies that formed the basis of an ultimately successful campaign. It hopes as well to provide proponents of agrarian reform, particularly in the Philippines, insights that may be useful in campaign work.

In order to analyze the walk as a social movement, the study utilizes the collective action frame theory, systematized by Benford & Snow (2000) as the theoretical framework where collective action frames are seen as the result of the active, processual production and maintenance of meaning by social movement actors for "constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers" in order to provide inspiration and legitimacy for action (Benford & Snow 2000: 613-614). Ten semistructured interviews were conducted with various actors in the agrarian reform movement. Informants were chosen by utilizing the snowball effect in combination with maximized sampling. Transcripts of interviews were analyzed using narrative analysis which fits well with the choice of theory as narrative analysis emphasizes the connections interviewees' make between events, how they make sense of them, and how they understand their own roles in them (Bryman 2004: 412-413). The particular mode of narrative analysis used is structural analysis which

emphasizes “the way a story is related” and “the use of narrative mechanisms for increasing the persuasiveness of a story.”

FRAMING PROCESSES AND THE SUMILAO FARMERS’ CASE

The Sumilao farmers’ case

The farmers of Sumilao, in the province of Bukidnon on the island of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines, were organized as a tribal group, the Higaonon tribe (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February).⁵ In 1996, a time of increased advocacy on agrarian reform, the Higaonons and the farmers from the surrounding areas formed the People’s Organization (PO), MAPALAD. MAPALAD later joined the provincial federation PALAMBU which became a member of the national federation PAKISAMA. A.J. Bag-ao (ibid.) said that organizing work was facilitated by these already existing structures when she first met them in 1996.

The Sumilao farmers were not aware of the status of agrarian reform implementation in their area. They were encouraged by BALAOD Mindanao to inquire about this from the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) (ibid.) from which they learned that it was being processed. However, the farmers later found out that they had been issued titles when they received a cancellation order from a Regional Trial Court. One hundred thirty-seven (137) farmers were awarded Certificate of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) in 1995. When the farmers learned that they already owned land they had spent years processing for through CARP, they occupied and tilled the land until 3 days later when armed goons drove them out by firing upon them and letting their carabaos loose (ibid). The landowner was able to retrieve the property through a connection with the Executive Secretary of then President Fidel V. Ramos (S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March).

In 1997, some of the farmers launched a hunger strike in Cagayan de Oro and Manila, supported by Agrarian Reform Now (AR Now), PAKISAMA and a PHILDHRRRA affiliated NGO. “It lasted 28 days. High drama” (ibid.). It received wide attention from the agrarian reform movement, media and the public as well as politicians as it neared the 1998 presidential elections.

The hunger strike resulted in a win-win decision by President Ramos to give 100 hectares to the farmers and 44 hectares to the landowner (ibid: A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February). However, the landowner managed to get the Supreme Court to retrieve the 100 hectares. The Supreme Court

decision in 1999 was so technical that “[e]ven lawyers found it difficult to understand”, it “(has to be) discussed in law school” (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February).

Following the 1999 final decision by the Supreme Court, one of the farmers committed suicide in protest (S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March). The farmers then turned to the new administration under Joseph Estrada⁶ who promised to help them (ibid.). As nothing happened for five months, the farmers went on a hunger strike. President Estrada’s response was aggressive that consequently, the Sumilao farmers joined forces with the movement that later proposed the impeachment of the President, successfully removing him from office during the EDSA II uprising in 2000.

Over the years since 1996, they went on hunger strike. They went on land entry knowing that they were already owners. They even attempted to stop the traffic and lie down on the road. They were imprisoned for several times but they adapted. They went on a lot of dialogues and joined all major conferences just to say something about their case. They wrote letters and then they lost in the Supreme Court in 1999.

A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February

And then finally they said, “Ok, we lost. We lost”. And they waited [...]

S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March

The walk as form of protest

Genesis and dramatization

S. Banzuela (2009, interview, 5 March), national coordinator of the national federation of farmers PAKISAMA, emphasized that discursive and strategic processes were part of their agenda: “One of the basic strategies of PAKISAMA in pushing and in advocating for Agrarian Reform is to identify a policy precedent land case that can dramatize and highlight the issue, especially the importance of Agrarian Reform, and to highlight the issue also in the implementation of Agrarian Reform.”

It is ironic that what opened up as an opportunity for the Sumilao farmers to reclaim their lands was a technicality considering that they lost their lands also due to a technicality. A provision in the Rules of Conversion stated that the plan for conversion should be fully implemented after five years. However, when five years passed in August 2004, there was still no sign of activity within the 144 hectares area (S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March; A.J.

Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February). The land owner sold the property to the San Miguel Corporation in 2002, which planned to construct a piggery on the property. However, such use was not part of the approved conditions for conversion of the land.

In November 2004, the farmers sent a petition to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), asking them to include the property again in its land reform program since it had not been converted (ibid). The petition work took two years. PAKISAMA was in an organizational crisis between 2003 and 2006 and was consequently unable to offer assistance to the farmers. During this period, the pleadings and organizational work were carried out by the NGO BALAOD Mindanaw.

PAKISAMA's crisis ended in July 2006 when a Unity Conference was held (S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March). The elected chairperson at the conference was a Sumilao farmer who brought attention to the farmers' plan to take action. A proposal for funding was submitted to the International Land Coalition (ILC) in July 2007. Subsequently, USD 20,000 was approved for the project.

The farmers were agitated and a sense of urgency to do something followed when the San Miguel Corporation started the construction of buildings and roads on the property: "When they saw four concrete buildings being constructed, and when they saw a boar the size of a cow [...], [t]hey said, 'We have to stop this. This cannot go on because if we allow San Miguel to continue building structures, whatever we do will be useless as we will not be able to plow cemented fields anymore [...]. And they already started constructing roads.' So they were really worried" (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February).

The decision in September 2007 to do the 1,700 kilometers walk was the outcome of a planning meeting that S. Banzuela, and then PAKISAMA president, Crispino Aguelo, convened with the farmer leaders of SALFA, MAPALAD, the San Vicente Landless Farmers Association, BALAOD Mindanaw, PHILDHARRA and BMFI (ibid.). Expressed during the meeting was the need to dramatize the case as a peaceful protest, but the farmers felt that they could not repeat the hunger strike they did 10 years ago. There was also the question of how to pressure government from so far away (S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March; J.D. Capacio 2009, interview, 18 February).

A.J. Bag-ao (2009, interview, 18 February) mentioned that there were a number of inspirational sources for the walk. The leaders had all gone through

a peace-building formation program during which, some were inspired by “The salt march” – a movie on Gandhi. Back then, there were already talks about an ‘exodus’ among them. It is unclear who spawned the idea for a walk during the brainstorming, but as J.D. Capacio (2009, interview, 18 February) puts it: “What I’m sure of is that even if [the Sumilao farmers] didn’t start the idea, at some point they owned it and they embraced it. That’s why it came to be. If the farmers are not really sure of the form, it would manifest and it would not really succeed.” The walk was set to begin on the 10th anniversary of the hunger strike, October 9 (S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March).

The impact of exodus

Members of the agrarian reform community felt that there was a need to raise awareness on the issue (A.J. Ledesma 2009, interview, 13 March; A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February) because it has been lost in the minds of the general public. A.J. Bag-ao (2009, interview, 18 February) relates this loss of awareness to the Supreme Court’s revocation of then President Ramos’ decision to award them land. The farmers had already gotten media attention and when the Supreme Court ruling came, the technicality of the ruling was so complex that it escaped the news pages and was little known outside the legal community.

The time of the walk’s arrival in Manila was deliberately planned to coincide with Congress’ decision on extension of CARP in December 2008 (J.D. Capacio 2009, interview, 18 February), as a way to generate support and “put [agrarian reform] in the minds of the public again.” Walking, being a time consuming endeavor, also symbolized that agrarian reform is a continuous, live issue (A.J. Ledesma 2009, interview, 13 March). The walk generated impact not only in the rural areas, “but on the urban people as well because, my God, it boggles the mind!” (R. Hontiveros 2009, interview, 27 February).

Suddenly Sumilao is a walking distance. Bukidnon has become walking distance. Manila. No one has ever...the concept of distance. Well. This is amazing. Many groups here, later, urban poor groups: “My God, we are very near Malacañang.⁷ We don’t march every day. Why don’t we march to Malacañang every day?”

S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March

I think [...] it provides a visual for the urban centers to see that [...] this is still a rural country and there are a lot of people coming in from rural areas and they constitute a bigger number.

A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February

A.J. Bag-ao (ibid) further relates this impact on the urban mind to the effectiveness of the walk in reaching out to the public. For example, the distance of the walk and the physical struggle of the walk were related to the physical hardships of being a farmer (A.S. Garcia 2009, interview, 2 February; J.D. Capacio 2009, interview, 18 February; R. Hontiveros 2009, interview, 27 February). It was viewed as a form of demonstration, interpreted as being an active event naturally inherent to the farmers and what they can do. The physicality of the walk was promoted as being lively and active, and was contrasted with the previous hunger strike which was seen as less lively than walking (J.D. Capacio 2009, interview, 18 February). "Death through hunger" was "a last resort," carrying little energy and hope (A.S. Garcia 2009, interview, 2 February). A.S. Garcia (ibid) further contrasts the hunger strike with the walk by viewing it as waiting for something to happen instead of making something happen. Agrarian reform must be earned. The walk also made the Sumilao farmers' issue in particular, and agrarian reform in general, personal.

During the planning of the walk, 100 volunteered. But BALAOD Mindanaw could not handle 100 people due to accommodation issues (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February). They used physical fitness as a criterion to limit participation to 50 volunteers. However, when the walk began, a few farmers discreetly joined the marchers, bringing the total number of participants to 55. "I think the number of farmers walking was significant and the fact that they were able to come here together, you know, you see a lot of faces walking."

I.J. Chan-Gonzaga (2009, interview, 17 March) also observed that when the farmers walked from one parish to another, one diocese to another, speaking to the bishops, they made the walk personal. It was no longer the abstract notion of a 'farmer,' but a face and a name that was fighting for his land. Cardinal Rosales who used to be bishop of Malaybalay during the time of the farmers' hunger strike, also saw it as a personal matter. The Cardinal's engagement with the Sumilao farmers' campaign was unique considering his position as a leading authority in the Catholic Church.

He knows the people personally. He knows the place. And I think he got fed up with all these news that that's barren lands. I think he got so irritated because he mentioned this during his homilies: "I would say

mass there every month. And I remember clearly that that's not barren land." He said, "I see irrigation of natural water supply. It's not even created by the National Irrigation Agency. It is a natural irrigation." He kept repeating that again and again and again. And he was pointing to the farmers, "I know you! I know you!" and then he was asking for names and the farmers would reply "*patay*," or dead already. So he knew them! I think what made him really engage was that these were people he knew. These were farmers he broke bread with.

I.J. Chan-Gonzaga 2009, interview, 17 March

The public also viewed the walk as a farmers' expression of duty which was manifested in the way they displayed discipline and decisiveness as they managed to walk the distance as a group (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February). *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* mentioned this as having captured the imagination of the public, according to S. Banzuela (2009, interview, 5 March).

The Sumilao Farmers' case reached resolution in 29 March 2008 when the San Miguel Corporation agreed to donate 50 hectares to the Sumilao farmers and to place 94 hectares under the CARP Voluntary Offer to Sell (VOS) scheme thus covering the entire contested 144 hectares property (AFA 2008a; KAISAHAN 2008).

Analysis of the walk as a form of protest action

This section provides an analysis of the processes that led to the walk as a form of action, and its impacts. The action oriented function of collective action frames is divided into three core framing tasks: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing. The core framing tasks addresses the problems of consensus mobilization and action mobilization (Benford & Snow 2000: 615).

Diagnostic framing is the task of identifying the problem (ibid.) – in this case, the failure to properly implement agrarian reform. Prognostic framing attempts at formulating a solution to the problem. It "addresses the Leninist question of what is to be done," and on reaching consensus in this matter as well as how to mobilize for action (ibid: 616-617). Prognostic framing takes place within a social movement industry (SMI) as well as in relation to the social movement organization's (SMOs') "opponents, targets of influence, media, and bystanders." Prognostic framing is usually where SMOs differ from each other, for instance the SMOs on the far left of the political spectrum proposed the GARB as opposed to CARPER.

Motivational framing provides adherents with a vocabulary for engaging in collective action and for sustaining participation, and is articulated as severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety (ibid: 617). These vocabularies can be emphasized in different combinations which can affect their outcome as either complementary or contradictory.

In addition to the three core framing tasks, there are three overlapping processes which affect the way frames are “developed, generated, and elaborated”: discursive processes, strategic processes and contested processes (ibid: 623). Discursive processes refer to speech acts and are further divided into two processes: frame articulation and punctuation⁸ (ibid: 623). The former aligns experiences and events in a coherent fashion since an emerging collective action frame is not necessarily new in its ideational sense, but in its interpretation. The latter highlights issues, events or beliefs that can be conceptualized to link events or issues and symbolize “the larger frame or movement of which it is a part.”

Strategic processes, or frame alignment processes, are goal oriented and aim to recruit new members, mobilize adherents and acquire resources (ibid: 624). Four such processes are identified: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. Frame bridging links “two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem.” Frame amplification “involves the idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs.” Frame extension involves the incorporation of outlying issues into an SMO’s interests and frames with the aim to increase adherents (ibid: 625). Research on frame extension was not carried out, but the call for CARPER was at times merged with rallies against President Arroyo’s proposed charter change (that aimed to keep her in office beyond the mandate period). Frame transformation is the changing or replacing of previous understandings and meanings. Contested processes refers to challenges to actors’ reality construction from opponents or from actors’ who proposes opposing interpretations, but will not be elaborated here.

The form emerges

The conception of the walk as form corresponded to a prognostic framing task – what needed to be done to achieve implementation of agrarian reform for the Sumilao farmers? This study identifies discursive and strategic processes that guided the planning of the demonstration.

PAKISAMA implements an agenda that explicitly addresses punctuation and frame amplification. The Sumilao farmers' case was identified as being able to set a policy precedent and as such the choice of form aimed to punctuate, to discursively highlight agrarian reform in general. This study identifies three different types of strategic processes that guided the shaping of the walk as form: frame bridging, frame amplification and frame transformation.

As the methodology of Active Nonviolence has long been a practice by PAKISAMA, a peaceful form was sought and the walk was likely a result of frame bridging between an agrarian reform frame and a nonviolence frame. As frame amplification, PAKISAMA also sought a dramatic form in order to reopen peoples' minds to the issue, to invigorate agrarian reform. The choice of drama was a consequence of a frame transformation process. As a hunger strike was seen as not being alive, the movement sought to breathe new life into the issue. A novel form of expression was needed and new methods, a new drama, had to be found.

Vocabularies of severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety were utilized to bring about action, summarized as follows:

Severity	Urgency and Efficacy	Propriety
Poverty and landlessness were conditions the farmers had to endure and their need to address this was most tragically expressed in the suicide of a Sumilao farmer following the Supreme Courts' decision.	When the San Miguel Corporation began converting the land and built constructions on the property, the farmers realized that the land could become useless to farming. If it continued unhindered the loss of the farming lands would be final.	The hunger strike had been an inactive, waiting, form and following the frame transformation, the re-evaluation of what methods to use, the walk was an active, physical endeavor, making something happen.

The Banasi and Calatagan farmers

The successful Sumilao campaign created a new buzzword in the land development discourse: '*Mag-Sumilao ka*', to 'Do a Sumilao', meaning to do the impossible, and specifically to walk (A.S. Garcia 2009, interview, 2 February; S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March). "Sumilao became a poster boy for the CARPER issue" (I.J. Chan-Gonzaga 2009, interview, 17 March), "the icon of agrarian reform" (J.D. Capacio 2009, interview, 18 February).

PAKISAMA's intended punctuation of agrarian reform was therefore deemed successful.

The success in turn led to frame amplification – i.e. how CARP can serve the interests of the farmers, and punctuation, by highlighting the Sumilao case as a symbol of the agrarian reform movement, especially the CARPER movement as a whole. The effect the Sumilao campaign had on other farmer groups; e.g. the Banasi and the Calatagan farmers respectively, would inspire subsequent actions. In November 2008, a group of farmers from Banasi, Bicol, walked 444 km to Manila.⁹ According to A.S. Garcia (2009, interview, 2 February), this was “a product of the Sumilao walk.” Like the Sumilao campaign, the outcome of the Banasi farmer's walk also became a success story. The cancellation of their land titles was reversed.

The Banasi farmers previously joined the Sumilao farmers in their walk as they passed their area but did not continue on to Manila (ibid). The experience, however, inspired them to organize a walk of their own, promoting their own local issue. The Banasi walk was coordinated by SALIGAN and two farmer leaders from Sumilao, paralegal Renato “Ka Rene” Peñas and Yoyong who visited them as officers of PAKISAMA. The experience of the Sumilao walk also taught the Banasi farmers that the Church can be a useful ally that can provide food, logistics and links to networks from the parishes to the highest leaders of the Church. The support of Bishop Pabillo and Cardinal Rosales had become highly symbolic during the Sumilao campaign because they were known to be influential. Having been contacted by SALIGAN and seeing the campaign to be timely, Bishop Pabillo offered further contacts and provided the Church as a haven for the farmers.

Upon reaching Manila, the national attention they received compelled the Office of the President to act as there were also allegations that someone in the Office of the President is related to the land owners. The victory was further attributed to the Church's successful influence on Cabinet Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III in the Office of the President. Secretary Bello was moved by the farmers. Being of the opinion that there was “foul play inside the bureaucracy,” “the Banasi walk created a venue for him to exercise what he wanted to do.”

The other group of farmers from Calatagan also walked with the Sumilao farmers in December 2007, supporting them in their case (J.D. Capacio 2009, interview, 18 February).¹⁰ “The Calatagan farmers felt the need to support this, [the Sumilao farmers] needed to be victorious so that we could [...] hold

on to a victory, a success story and claim to the world that agrarian reform works." The contested lands in Calatagan were, however, still locked in dispute between the farmers and Asturias Chemical Industries, which happened to be also owned by San Miguel Foods Inc. In supporting the Sumilao farmers, the Calatagan farmers wanted to show that they could also mobilize for their own case, which they proceeded to do in April 2008 (ibid).

During the Sumilao campaign, the Church asked the Calatagan farmers to remain silent about their own case so as not to confuse issues and "get the ire of Ramon Ang," the owner, who gave the Sumilao farmers a chance at negotiations (ibid). Since the Calatagan farmers walk in April 2008 onwards, the Church, in particular Bishop Pabillo, Cardinal Rosales and the Archbishop of Lipa, Batangas who had supported them in the past, gave its full support to the farmers.

FRAME BRIDGING AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A church of the poor

"The 1960 national census, the last one which listed religious affiliation, had 83.8 percent identifying themselves as Roman Catholics[...]", a figure which Carroll (2004: 55) doubts has changed much over the years, even though there has been a rise in number of smaller non-ecumenical sects. It follows that in a dominantly Catholic nation, the ability to mobilize resources through the church's network of churches, schools, universities and organizations is of no little importance.

Prior to the Sumilao walk, the Church was not expected to offer assistance beyond the provision of space and issuance of statements (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February). The Church was already involved with the Sumilao farmers 12 years before when the local church in Cagayan de Oro was first approached by the farmers. However, most of their previous involvement consisted of singing at masses, saying mass for the hunger strikers and offering counsel (A.J. Ledesma 2009, interview 13 March; I.J. Chan-Gonzaga 2009, interview, 17 March). Very explicitly, I.J. Chan-Gonzaga (ibid) stated, "We got involved in agrarian reform precisely because of Sumilao." The walk opened up a new venue for support and resources from the Church (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February).

A.J. Bag-ao (2009, interview, 18 February), executive trustee of BALAOD Mindanaw, said that during ground working, its focus was not on the Church, but on other NGOs and farmers organizations that the farmers met with prior

to the walk, asking them to hold forums and provide accommodation in the provinces that they would pass. “We never thought that the church will be very instrumental in making sure that we get to Manila safely.” Involving the bishops was an initiative from the farmers who felt that the church had been supportive of them ever since the hunger strike.

Bishop Ledesma of the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, the first major city in the walk, and Bishop Pacana from the Diocese of Malaybalay, under which Sumilao belongs, are Jesuits. There was therefore a Jesuit network that could facilitate the walk (A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February; I.J. Chan-Gonzaga 2009, interview, 17 March). I.J. Chan-Gonzaga (2009, interview, 17 March) explained that “by sheer affiliation and fraternal cooperation, we realized we have to be on top of this.”

The Jesuits’ networking efforts had a motivational effect on how the planning proceeded during the walk as there emerged a sense of duty among the participants towards the Church:

In fact, when they walked—they started the walk—they brought with them a tent thinking that there would be circumstances when they would sleep on the road. But when the Bishop heard about that plan, he said: “Oh, no, so we will contact other parishes and make sure that your route will be close to a church”. When you stop for the day, you’re closer to a church. That’s why sometimes we’d get there at 5 pm, or 6, or 7, or 9, or 11, because we wanted to come closer to a church although initially that was not the plan. We said, wherever we feel tired, we will stop, but because the bishops had already said: “Oh, the next Church said they already prepared dinner” so we had to, oh, move a little bit. So it was at least 40 km per day, but there were times when it was 35 or 56 depending on the proximity of the next, of the nearby parish who committed to provide food and shelter for the night.

A.J. Bag-ao 2009, interview, 18 February

When the Sumilao farmers reached Manila, they proceeded directly to the Church of the Gesù – located inside the Ateneo de Manila University campus where the socio-political arm of the Jesuits, the Simbahang Lingkod ng Bayan (SLB) has its office. Cardinal Rosales said mass there for them (I.J. Chan-Gonzaga 2009, interview, 17 March). I.J. Chan-Gonzaga (ibid.) explained that the Cardinal’s involvement sent a signal not just to the Jesuits but to the Church in general that “This is a call to the religious and to the clergy.” He further mentioned that “I have a letter here for the president that I want the farmers to hand carry to Malacañang and I want the seminarians

and the sisters to make sure that the farmers reach the gates of Malacañang.” Consequently the Church held a procession to Malacañang where, Chan-Gonzaga observed, President Arroyo “had no choice but to accommodate them precisely because of that.” The pressure the Church exercised on Malacañang led to a meeting between two of the farmer leaders and the President.

As a consequence of the Church’s action in behalf of the Sumilao farmers, other farmer groups began approaching the Church for support as well:

[T]hat’s why this year all of a sudden all the other farmer groups thought we were the ones responsible and actually we’re not. The only thing we were able to do was to bridge the farmers and the church and now that that’s bridged, for me, we’ve done our part, but they always come back to us [...]. So at the same time we’re trying to help and we’re helping precisely because it is a mandate of the church.

I.J. Chan-Gonzaga 2009, interview, 17 March

In 1992, the bishops and lay people held the Philippine Plenary Council of the Philippines II (PCP II), during which it was declared that the Church would be a church of the poor, taking their needs in consideration and encouraging the rich to share their resources with them (ibid). The PCP II is likened to Vatican II which, with the 1968 Bishop’s Conference in Medellin, led to fundamental changes within the Catholic Church (Kamrava & Mora 1998: 331-332, 337-338). In Latin America at the time, the adopted agenda for social justice by the Church was conducive to the growth of civil society. It followed therefore that the development of grassroots neighborhood organizations, and consequent horizontal relationships within civil society in Chile and Brazil in 1980 was facilitated by church involvement.

Between the mid-1940s until the beginning of the 1970s, two developments occurred analogous to each other (Carroll 2004: 56-57). The Catholic Church developed its programme on social justice and established the Institute of Social Order to undertake social development. The other major Christian churches followed their example in the 1960s. Subsequent to the social justice agenda that followed Vatican II and the Bishop’s Conference in Medellin was the emergence of liberation theology which in the Philippines served as inspiration, alongside writings of Mao and Professor Jose Maria Sison,¹¹ for peasants, students and some Christians during the rise of the communist movement in the 1960s. The National Democratic Front (NDF) served as an umbrella for Maoist civil society organizations, such as the

Christians for National Liberation (CNL), which was headed by a Catholic priest.


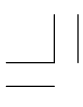
The engagement of the Church in the local Sumilao farmers' case which subsequently developed into involvement in the national CARPER issue was thus aided by an already existing social justice paradigm. A.J. Ledesma (2009, interview, 13 March) related the conditions of the rural poor and landless to the identification by the Church of such as social justice issues which needed to be addressed. It was also a way for the Church to reiterate its position as a church of the poor. I.J. Chan-Gonzaga (2009, interview, 17 March) further highlighted this by saying that: "for the first time, the church was able to say that we are still pro-poor." There was a need for it as the major criticism against the Catholic Church was that it has forgotten "how to mingle with the poor" and that it has "become too comfortable having dinner with politicians and landlords."

I.J. Chan-Gonzaga (ibid.) argued that there is a need for asset reform in the Philippines in general. If agrarian reform can be properly implemented, other asset reforms will follow. Successful implementation of CARP in the Sumilao farmers' case concretized the urgency for this through the walk. The Sumilao campaign opened up an educational process on agrarian reform within the Church, as the farmers managed to talk to a third of the dioceses in the country during the walk. This facilitated an opening for discussions on the issue of CARP within the Church because the farmers were not only bannerizing the local disputed 144 hectares, but also CARPER. This subsequently led to the defense of the call for agrarian reform at the Association of Major Religious Superiors.

Active Nonviolence

Another factor that played an important part in this movement was the walk as a peaceful form of protest. Nonviolent strategies had played an important part in the EDSA Revolution, or People Power revolution, that led to the ouster of President Marcos in 1986. Many of the social movement organizations as well as the bishops went through workshops in non-violent strategies prior to EDSA Revolution and had adopted such. This was to be contrasted with the strategies of the radical left.

After President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, the Church became divided into three camps (Carroll 2004: 57-58): the conservatives, who supported Marcos and amongst whom the majority of the bishops were found, along with congregation superiors and individual



priests and nuns; the moderates, comprised of a minority of (younger) bishops, the leadership of the Associations of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) and individual Church people who felt that Martial Law was oppressive and impeded development; and a handful of religious authorities who were linked to the radicals, those who joined the revolutionary left, consisting mostly of Church people working in direct contact with the poor. Apart from the tensions this caused within the Church, it also affected relations with the state (Carroll 2004: 58-59). Bishops, who otherwise rejected the left, refused to expose their fellows to a military known for violating human rights. Likewise, moderate organizers sought protection in rebel camps. Furthermore, moderates and radicals often shared a background in common church-based training programmes which facilitated contact. However, it also made church programmes open to infiltration by the left. As a consequence, the military viewed all community organizers as potential communists. These tensions led the bishops to make an official stance of their own which resulted in a joint pastoral letter in February 1983, "A Dialogue for Peace," where they criticized the oppressive government and human rights violations on the parts of both the right and the left.

Following the assassination of Marcos-critic Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino in 1983, which was believed to have been staged by the government, protests steadily built and crystallized into two divisions (Carroll 2004: 61-62). The "yellow stream," which wanted a "parliamentary and reformist" solution to economic and political problems caused by the Marcos regime, consisted mainly of leading people from the Church and businessmen close to it as well as those who were mobilized as a result of Aquino's murder. Many also sought social change to be achieved through non-violence. The "red stream" consisted of the organizations allied with the left, priests and church workers amongst them, and militant organizations of workers, peasants and urban poor; those disgruntled with the elites and the inability of the government to address fundamental socio-economic issues in society. These issues were to be resolved even through means of armed struggle.

Aiming for peaceful change, the "yellow stream" re-established the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) and, with Cardinal Sin, urged participation in the 1984 National Assembly election (Carroll 2004: 62-63). The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) took a neutral stance focusing on maintaining honest elections. The "red stream" boycotted the elections. However, the opposition succeeded in mobilizing a high turnout of votes.

In 1986 the economic conditions and violence had escalated and President Marcos called for a snap election to gain mandate against a presumed fractioned opposition. Again, the “red stream” urged boycott.¹² NAMFREL was now backed by the CBCP, supporting the candidate Corazon “Cory” Aquino, the wife of the assassinated Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino. The official election results were perceived to be fraudulent and was publicly condemned by the CBCP. This positioning of the bishops upset not only President Marcos, but also the Vatican. Carroll (2004: 64) stated that the bishops “situated themselves within the Christian community, not above it.” They reported what they saw and asked people to, in a spirit of non-violence, to act upon it, respecting the individuals’ agency regarding political choices. What followed were the mass mobilizations that ousted Marcos, as called by Cardinal Sin. Carroll (2004: 54) attributed the nonviolence practices taught in seminars by church-based active non-violence groups as conducive to the success of the mass mobilizations.

The concept of Active Nonviolence was introduced in the Philippines through a series of workshops in 1984 by John Goss and Hildegard Goss-Mayer from the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March). One workshop was held for the bishops and two for NGOs and SMOs. The movement *Aksyon Para sa Kapayapaan at Katarungan* (AKKAPKA) was formed to combat injustice using Active Non-Violence (ANV) methods and principles.

I happened to be one of those who participated in that workshop. And I was convinced to the point that I left my previous organization to join that movement. Because I felt that [...] this is the movement to topple Marcos’ dictatorship.

S. Banzuela 2009, interview, 5 March

In PAKISAMA’s reading of events, the EDSA revolution did not just happen by people saying “Let’s do this.” In S. Banzuela’s estimate, “at least some 6,000” people participated in AKKAPKA workshops. One of them was Butch Aquino, the brother of Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, who was leading one of the marches during the EDSA rallies.

Following the EDSA revolution, PAKISAMA incorporated ANV into its political education program, using the materials of AKKAPKA. One of the participants in and trainers of ANV in the early 1990s was Peter Tuminghay, a farmer leader of MAPALAD, which is a member organization of PAKISAMA. This affected the outcome of the planning for the Sumilao farmers’ campaign

in 1997 when the initiative for a hunger strike suggested by Tuminghay was adopted instead of the suggestion of the community organizers to take up arms.


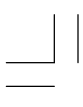
Frame bridging

The processes that led to the conception and legitimization of the walk as form of protest had consequences on how the Catholic Church became involved in the agrarian reform movement. Successful frame amplification personalized the issue and galvanized support from the Cardinal, and arguably from other Church people as well. The walk itself also became a method by which the farmers educated the communities they passed on agrarian reform. This consequently facilitated the educational process on the issue within the Church. The successful outcome inspired other farmers’ groups to seek support and resources from the Church, a call which the latter could not ignore.

Aligning the agrarian reform frame with the Church’s already existent social justice frame, the motivational vocabulary that called the church to act can be translated as following:

Severity	Urgency	Efficacy	Propriety
The Church felt a need to improve upon its reputation as a church of the poor.	The urgency of the case translated into urgency for the Church to act for it as it opened up an opportunity to show itself as a church of the poor.	There was a Jesuit network to facilitate immediate action.	According to the social justice agenda introduced by Vatican II and the 1968 Bishop’s Conference in Medellin and further developed for the Philippines during PCP II, it was the duty of the Church to be pro-poor and to seek to resolve social justice issues. Agrarian reform addressed both issues of poverty alleviation and the right of land to the tiller.

The ANV frame was already shared by SMOs in the agrarian reform movement and members of the Catholic Church since the mid-1980s.



Considering that social movements differ the most in their methodologies—in how they address what needs to be done and how it is done—this study argues further that frame bridging between the agrarian reform movement’s agrarian reform frame and the Church’s social justice frame was facilitated by an intermediate frame, the shared ANV frame, that provided a common approach.

CONCLUSION

The Sumilao farmers’ walk became a landmark event in the recent history of agrarian reform in the Philippines. As the campaign became a success story for implementing CARP, this study was interested in understanding the processes leading to a successful campaign.

The prognostic framing task, what needed to be done and what form the demonstration would take, was partly addressed bearing in mind that the Sumilao farmers had exhausted almost every option of expressing their situation after years of futile struggle for their lands. Furthermore, the prognostic framing task corresponded to parallel discursive and strategic processes. The Sumilao farmers’ case was identified as being able to set a policy precedent for future land disputes and as such the campaign could punctuate, and discursively highlight, the need for agrarian reform in general. As there was a need to invigorate agrarian reform as an issue, there was in the same fashion a frame transformation of the understanding of how to conduct a demonstration. The decision to walk was seen as being active and lively in itself which was in contrast with the previous hunger strike in 1997 that was seen as passive and self destructive. The frame transformation called for a new way of dramatizing the issue, a new frame amplification to reopen peoples’ minds to the issue.

The motivational framing task articulated as severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety, that moved people to act were the socio-economic context of the farmers, ongoing land conversion which would make the farm lands useless, the need for bystander support, and a sense of duty to retrieve their lands by physical action.

Getting the Church on board proved instrumental for the Sumilao campaign’s success. The Church managed to provide a platform of political support for the farmers’ cause and logistics for the 1700 kilometer walk. Building bystander support was also facilitated by having the Church as an ally considering that Catholics constitute a large majority in the Philippines.

The Sumilao campaign set in motion a process of consolidating support from the Church which would continue during subsequent farmers' campaigns and later the CARPER campaign.

This study argues that one of the key elements for the successful frame bridging between the agrarian reform frame and the Church's social justice frame, i.e. what made interaction and cooperation possible, was an intermediate, shared, Active Nonviolence frame. Since the mid-1980s this methodology for executing demonstrations was shared by both SMOs in the agrarian reform movement and members of the Catholic Church. As SMOs often differ from each other when it comes to the prognostic framing task, this can arguably underscore the importance of shared methodologies in frame bridging processes.

The Sumilao campaign also facilitated the building and strengthening of horizontal relationships within civil society. However, it is felt that there is a need to accelerate that capacity:

It's a bit slow probably because also the mass movement in general has suffered a decline and has needed to really pick up the slack. That decline has been part of an overall durability of the traditional political set-up because even though there have been periodic political crisis and then late last year, this unprecedented international financial crisis really calling into question many of the basic dominant economic premises and even some, on the side, political premises. The mass movement hasn't been strong enough to take advantage of the opening and present itself as an alternative on many key issues. The same for the agrarian reform movement and in general, parties like us who support them or support the whole democratization struggle [...]. So there's a greater capacity for networking on their part and our part but we have to accelerate it and really use the basis of unity which is the CARPER Bill, which is the fundamental concern for agrarian reform as a way to consolidate that networking even for the long-term and even for other related struggles all within that democracy rubric. So yes, we have a lot of housekeeping to do and to do better.

R. Hontiveros 2009, interview, 27 February

The networking between SMOs that began during the Sumilao campaign thus continued with CARPER where the CARPER campaign in itself was an instrument to strengthen those ties.

Last 6 June 2009, the CARPER Bill was passed, extending funding for CARP for another five years (Philippine Daily Inquirer 2009a). Further studies

that focus on the relationship between collective action events and collective action, for example, how the Sumilao campaign affected the discourse on agrarian reform, the implications it had for the subsequent mobilizations in March 2009, and the outcome of the CARPER bill, could prove insightful.

NOTES

- 1 This article is based on the author 's master 's thesis in Asian Studies, Lund University, with the same title.
- 2 Based on the 2002-2003 East Asia Barometer Surveys.
- 3 Percent of respondents with a net preference for democratic (as opposed to authoritarian) regime or process.
- 4 As measured by Freedom House's 7-point indices of political rights and civil liberties in 2004 and according to Transparency International's Global Corruption Report 2004.
- 5 For additional details see BALAOD Mindanaw (2007); AFA (2008a); Philippine Daily Inquirer (2007).
- 6 Reid (2001: 781-782) argues that Estrada was able to emerge as the following President out of a reaction against Ramos' failed neoliberal programme. His pro-poor agenda played out favorably, combined with the Asian financial crisis of 1997. Estrada's supporters were mainly amongst the poor and the excluded in society who identified with his background (Carroll 2004: 69-71).
- 7 The presidential palace.
- 8 Benford & Snow (2000: 623) alternatively calls 'punctuation' frame amplification,' but as the term is also used with a different meaning when discussing strategic processes, 'punctuation' is used instead to avoid confusion over the terms.
- 9 For additional details see AFA (2008b).
- 10 For additional details see Calatagan March (2008).
- 11 Chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and founder of its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).
- 12 This was one key event that eventually led to a major split in the left in the early 1990s that reverberates throughout Philippine political society even today. A detailed account can be found in Rocamora (1994).

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
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