Forest Devolution and Social Capital

State–Civil Society Relations in the Philippines

Francisco Magno

Introduction

Shifts in state-civil society relations have historically shaped forest devolution policies in the Philippines. Rules governing forest utilization and tenure emerge through competitive struggles as well as cooperative encounters involving state and civil society. Since the 1970s, the evolution of policy measures to transfer forest authority to local communities has contributed to the growth of reform advocates inside government and their strategic interactions with civil society organizations engaged in efforts to build equity and livelihood concerns into upland development programs.

In examining the role of state-civil society interactions, one should understand how different stakeholders affect authority structures in the forest zones—the general pattern of distribution of power among the state and forest-dependent communities; the extent to which local communities, with the support of civil society organizations, are able to expand their opportunities to decide the fate of forests under contemporary laws and policies; the role of social capital as an institutional asset in improving local participation and capacity in forest governance.

State and Civil Society

Analyzing the politics of state-civil society relations is important in understanding the continuities and changes in Philippine forest policies. The terrain of politics is not captured by the study of the state or government alone. Rather, it is defined by processes of governance that encompass the matrix of rule making, monitoring, and implementation activities exercised by many intertwined social players and institutions. The state is normally conceived as the repository of legitimate power. Nevertheless, the actual effectiveness of such political authority is negotiated and exercised within a specific social space. The state affects public choices but is shaped in turn by the kind of society where it is embedded.
The organization of state power influences the incentive mechanisms for various types of collective action. In actual terms, the state is seldom a solitary player in a policy game where diverse stakeholders are organized. State effectiveness does not arise from its autonomy from social forces but is a function of the varied forms in which state-society relations occur. Policy outcomes cannot be reduced to societal demands. Instead, they should be seen as products of the dynamic interface between central authority structures (state) and independent associations (civil society). Depending on how decentralization processes operate, powers vested in the state may be concentrated in the national government (center) or devolved to the field offices and the local governments.

Civil society associations can enhance democratization processes by increasing citizen representation, demanding the transparency of government transactions, and fostering the accountability of public officials. A strong civil society can play a disciplinary role in relation to the state by enforcing standards of public morality and responsibility. However, not every autonomous group can be considered as having a democratic disposition. Problems may also arise when civil society is perceived as a replacement of government in the performance of public duties.

Forest devolution is aimed at handing over resource management authority to local communities and local government units. However, the effectiveness of local resource management relies heavily on the kind of civil society existing in specific communities. Local communities with dense networks of voluntary organizations, high levels of trust, and strong social cohesiveness have better social preparation in mobilizing people to undertake forest protection compared to communities with weak civil society formations. Where cooperative relations are missing, investments in social capital are needed to stimulate the establishment of civil society organizations that would serve as engines of collective action in a community. At the community level, civil society groups are expected to enhance the performance of coordinated ventures through their advocacy, organizing, and capacity-building functions.

Social Capital and Collective Action

The theory of social capital provides an important lens for viewing state–civil society relations and evaluating their impact on forest devolution. It is grounded on the perspective that stable and cooperative social relationships engender efficient and effective collective action processes. Social capital could be found in norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement. It is a strategic asset embodied in trust, norms, obligations, and networks that can improve the quality of development outcomes by facilitating coordinated activities.

The main factors contributing to the creation and sustainability of social capital include the closure of social networks, stability of social relations, continuity of mutual aid arrangements, and maintenance of regular communications. Cohesive social relations prevent disruptions that could potentially lead to the devaluation of social capital. The continuity of mutual aid arrangements increases the amount...
of social capital in circulation through the reinforcement of norms of cooperation. Like human capital and physical capital, social capital depreciates over time and demands constant renewal. It is renewed and sustained at various levels of human interactions.

The degree of social capital in different scales and loci of state–civil society relations affects the degree of forest devolution. In support of this proposition, three corollary arguments are presented. First, where internal social capital is strong, local communities have effectively resisted state efforts to centralize forest authority. Second, in historical conjunctures where social capital is strong across civil society and government, the resulting cooperation has led to more effective advocacy for devolution policies. Third, in cases where internal social capital is strong and where there is support from local government units and civil society associations, the implementation of forest devolution has been more effective.

Strong social capital has enabled a few upland communities to protect traditional resource systems against the centralizing agenda of the state. In the 1970s, the Kalinga and Bontoc people were initially divided but eventually forged the social cooperation needed to launch collective actions to successfully block government plans to construct a huge hydroelectric dam along the mighty Chico River in the Cordillera mountains of northern Luzon. The foreign-funded project would have destroyed a large number of forest villages and centuries-old trees and rice terraces. On the other hand, the Kalanguya tribe residing in the upper slopes of the Caraballo Sur went a step further in their defense of ancestral domain. The village elders mobilized the people to form a local association that petitioned the government to recognize the legitimacy of their occupation of forestland through the signing of a communal lease agreement in 1974. These episodes indicate the positive role that strong internal social capital can play in sustaining local forest governance.

In the past, ancient norms and practices prevented the excessive use of forest resources in many mountain villages. Symbolic rituals were held to accord reverence to sacred trees. Premium value was placed on social solidarity, interpersonal reciprocity, group labor, and communal forest tenure. Nevertheless, these traditional sources of social capital have gradually eroded due to economic transformations that rocked the foundations of social trust and cohesion in many communities.

Loo Valley, which is ensconced in the northeastern portion of Benguet Province, experienced rapid forest loss starting in the 1950s due to the rapid pace of logging and commercial vegetable production in the area. Resource extractive technologies designed to convert forests into production areas were vigorously promoted. These changes have led to the restructuring of social capital characterized by, among other things, a decline of trust on traditional processes of resource allocation and dispute resolution based on the bodong or peace pact. Subsequently, the weakening of internal social capital may create gaps in local coordination.

Aside from promoting local coordination, strong social capital across civil society and government fosters cooperation that can lead to more effective policy advocacy on forest devolution. Cultivating synergy that breaks through the public-private divide offers great potentials for enhancing the quality of policy interventions. With the collaborative efforts of reform advocates inside and outside the
state, policy initiatives become more productive. Democratic restoration in 1986 precipitated the entry of civil society leaders in various government agencies. It also energized policy discussions on participation and devolution issues in the environment and forestry sector.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was reorganized in 1987 to strengthen its environmental protection functions. A Special Concerns Office was established to consider the problems confronting tribal people in forest areas. Consequently, the DENR became a source of policy assistance to indigenous groups and their civil society supporters in seeking recognition for ancestral land rights. It lobbied for the passage of a congressional bill proposing the creation of a commission that would rule over ancestral land claims and disputes. In the face of legislative inaction, in 1990 the DENR issued an administrative order and circular creating a Special Task Force on Ancestral Domains.\(^{13}\) The task force was mandated to accept applications of ancestral land claims, initially from the Cordillera communities, and eventually from other tribal groups as well. As a tenure instrument, the certificate of ancestral land claim (CALC) falls short of providing the sense of security derived from an individual or communal land title. Nevertheless, it was a crucial policy tool for engaging the state in the process of devolving forest rights to indigenous cultural communities.\(^{14}\)

A stable policy framework is vital to the long-term growth of social capital. Government institutions participate in the making of social capital through the generation of policy incentives.\(^{15}\) Such incentives may take the form of legal guarantees for citizens to establish associations in forest communities without interference from the state. Likewise, voluntary organizations can flourish if their activities are exempted from taxation and other forms of liabilities. Institutions induce coordinated actions through the application of both formal rules (e.g., constitutions, laws, and property rights) and informal constraints (e.g., sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct).\(^{16}\) Secure property rights can encourage upland villagers to undertake long-term improvements in forest areas.

In circumstances where internal social capital is strong and where local governments and civil society organizations show support, the pursuit of forest devolution measures have been efficiently undertaken. In the province of Palawan, members of the Batak and Tagbanua tribal communities residing in the Kayasan forest area of Puerto Princesa City formed a local association called the Samahan ng mga Tribu sa Palawan (SATRIKA). With the aid of voluntary organizations such as Tanggapang Panligal ng Katutubong Pilipino (PANLIPI), Nagkakaisang Tribu ng Palawan (NATRIPAL), and Tribal Filipino Apostolate (TFA), SATRIKA filed an application for a certificate of ancestral domain claim (CADC). Successful claimants possess the right to occupy and utilize the land and natural resources covered by the tenure instrument. Together with the local government units concerned, certificate holders have the authority to regulate the entry of migrant settlers. They can also negotiate the terms and conduct of development projects by both public and private sectors to be undertaken within the ancestral borders.\(^{17}\) Aside from the support of tribal rights advocacy groups, SATRIKA’s effort to gain land tenure was endorsed by the local government of Puerto Princesa City. Financial support to delineate and
map the boundaries of the ancestral domain was extended by a German group called the Brandenburg Initiative Group to Save the Philippine Rainforest. The Provincial Special Task Force on Ancestral Domain (PSTFAD) recommended the approval of the Kayasan CADC in 1994. Harnessing the social capital and trust among both government and civil society stakeholders in forest devolution proved pivotal in the efficient transfer of ancestral domain rights to indigenous dwellers.

Where social capital is weak, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) have served as intermediaries in social preparation activities linked with forest management projects. They assist local people in organizing themselves, securing forest tenure, preparing annual work plans, and initiating enterprise development schemes. They help communities in negotiating with the state. The capacity to coordinate and interact effectively with government agencies also depends on the amount of social capital in state-community relations. Likewise, civil society does not reside exclusively within national boundaries. Voluntary organizations can transcend borders to promote sustainable development through the sharing of information, resources, and expertise. The forging of alliances at local and global settings increases the bargaining power of environmental groups in pushing for their policy preferences.

In addition to NGOs and people’s organizations, the civil society stakeholders that are important in the application of forest devolution in the Philippines include the local church, academe, media, and donor agencies.

**Phases of Forest Devolution**

Philippine forest history could be divided into four periodic segments corresponding to the changing trends in forest devolution. The first segment (1863–1970) was a counter-devolution phase that featured a dominant pattern of forest centralization. While the state sought to consolidate its control over public forestland, a few highland communities with strong social capital resisted centralization schemes in defense of local authority systems. The second segment (1971–1986) represented a shift in the state’s approach to forest dwellers in which it moved towards the provision of limited forms of occupancy and devolved rights to upland populations. Through the formation of the Upland Development Working Group in the early 1980s, civil society associations engaged forest officials in policy efforts to induce the wider involvement of people in forest reform initiatives.

The third segment (1987–1994) was characterized by the revival of democratic processes. This constituted the proper policy signal for donor agencies to channel extensive assistance to the forestry sector. In the face of strong civil society advocacy, multiple modes of devolution and local participation were incorporated in forest protection programs. The fourth segment (1995–present) represents the institutionalization of forest devolution. In 1995, an executive order declared the adoption of community-based forest management as the national strategy in governing forest areas. Under this program, local communities as represented by their organizations are entitled to occupy, possess, utilize, and develop forestlands. This indicates a departure from the old approach in forest governance that excludes local
participation. Nevertheless, the institutionalization of the new strategy requires further deepening through the legislation of a new forestry code. Its success also hinges on the cultivation of internal social capital in order to develop strong community organizations possessing effective linkages with the DENR, local government units, and civil society associations.

Centralization Phase (1863–1970)

The colonial period was marked by the centralization of forest authority. Under the regalian doctrine, forestland became public domain. Efforts were made to centralize even control over people living in the forests. Conflict became inevitable considering that the concept of a forest-dwelling population was incompatible with colonial intentions of control. Traditional upland dwellers were outlawed following the establishment of the first forest agency (Inspeccion General de Montes) in 1863. Throughout their rule, Spanish officials tried to resettle local people occupying forest areas into towns for easier supervision. However, as late as 1881, Governor General Fernando Primo de Rivera signed a decree declaring the colonial government’s resolve to complete the registration of native inhabitants into organized villages. The order declared that the authorities will offer the “unsubjugated races” portions of land and the right to cultivate them in the method they desire in exchange for their voluntary submission and consent to reside in towns.21

The royal decree providing for the application of Definitive Forest Laws and Regulations in the country was promulgated in 1889. Engaging in upland agriculture characterized by the application of kaingin or swidden techniques was declared a

---

Table 1. Policy Matrix under the Centralization Phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Establishment of the <em>Inspeccion General de Montes</em></td>
<td>The state’s forest agency declares the right to control forest access and utilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Definitive Forest Laws and Regulations (Royal Decree of the King of Spain)</td>
<td>Slash-and-burn cultivation or <em>kaingin</em> in the upland areas was prohibited with heavy penalties awaiting violators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td><em>Kaingin</em> Law (Act No. 274)</td>
<td><em>Kaingineros</em> and other forest occupants were to be punished and evicted from forest areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
criminal offense. The Kaingin Law of 1901 (Act No. 274) further reinforced moves to punish and eject swidden farmers from forestlands. Under these policy impositions, upland occupants were viewed as illegal residents in public land and portrayed as resource destroyers (see Table 1). Nevertheless, power is carved through a two-way process. The systematic exclusion of local people from forest governance resulted not only from the structural inequities engendered by elite domination. This state of affairs was also partially fostered by the lack of voluntary associations that were supportive of community rights to forest resources.

The expansion of state control over forest residents continued under U.S. rule. The mission in Northern Mindanao was to integrate the native Bukidnons into the lowland system. As an initial step, they had to be resettled on the plateau. A relentless campaign, led initially by Lieutenant Governor Frederick Lewis and later by Lieutenant Governor Manuel Fortich, was conducted between 1907 and 1914 to bring the Bukidnons down from the hills. Those who chose to stay in the forest confronted the threat of attack by Constabulary soldiers as magahats, a term which meant blood avengers but was later applied to all lawless elements hiding in the mountains.

In the province of Palawan, Lieutenant Governor Edward Miller encouraged migrants to settle in the municipality of Brooke’s Point to draw the southern portion of the island province into the ambit of colonial rule. The displacement of the indigenous group Pala’wan started in 1910 when the early settlers began claiming and converting forest areas into coconut plantations and cattle ranches. They acquired land even before the first land classification team arrived in Brooke’s Point in 1929, with the task of delineating the coastal lowlands from the mountainous uplands and setting aside the former for individual ownership while assigning the latter for public ownership. The settlers asserted their property rights to land that they viewed as abundant and otherwise unclaimed, including areas that the Pala’wan had not permanently converted from forest to agricultural land.

Prior to the entry of colonial forestry, forest governance operated within the context of great diversity in scale, culture, and tenure systems ranging from sultanates to more egalitarian hunter-gatherers. However, local modes of resource management were destabilized when the state advanced a homogenized version of forest allocation. The vast, complex, and negotiated social uses of the forest were ignored by the state. Traditional modes of governing the forest, framed along symbolic rituals and norms of reciprocity, were systematically displaced. Forest sequestration and state building efforts resulted in the imposition of a dominant lowland identity that consolidated state command over a disparate and unorganized civil society.

The forest governance structures that were instituted during the colonial period led to the concentration of resource authority in the arms of the state and its influential allies. Nevertheless, tribal communities, especially those with strong social capital, were able to resist eviction from their traditional abode. Fierce adherence to norms of community solidarity and independence led various groups in the Cordillera mountain region to defy, rather than comply, with the evacuation plans laid down in the Spanish Governor General’s directive of 1881. The imposition
ordered all highlanders to abandon their villages and settle in the lowlands where they could learn to farm and obey like lowland Filipinos. A contingent of Manila infantry and artillery was hauled to the northern highlands in support of the pacification campaign. Despite such threats, a Spanish friar noted how “the Mayaoyaos all around declined to abandon the soil which saw their birth and the vast majority in Kiangan and Silipan were disposed to defend their brutish independence at the cost of any manner of sacrifice.” Kalinga villagers from Mabuntoc obstructed road-building activities across Kalinga from Abra to Cagayan. Only the deficit in social capital and cooperation from Lepanto neighbors prevented the attempt by the Kalingas from waging an insurrectionary attack against the Spanish fort in Bontoc Province.


Since colonial times, the state removed and punished people residing inside forest boundaries. The move to rethink the policy of prosecuting upland communities was precipitated by the emergence of alternative perspectives among policy stakeholders, including multilateral donor agencies, as regards the positive role that tribal groups can play in resource conservation. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) based in Rome commissioned Harold Conklin, a Yale University anthropologist, to conduct research on the resource practices of the Hanunoo Mangyan of Occidental Mindoro Province. In 1957, the project report declared that through the resource stewardship of this indigenous community, swidden agriculture was pursued in a sustainable manner through the application of a fallow system that enabled the people to satisfy livelihood needs without threatening the biological diversity of the forest ecosystem. Although the FAO at that time was still mostly supporting efforts to improve timber production technology, the publication of the Conklin report provided the impetus for the holding of policy conferences that address the issue of local involvement in forest management.

In 1964, a Kaingin Council Meeting was convened in the Philippines. In this conference, representatives from government agencies, academic institutions, and civil society organizations began to look at the kaingin issue within a social framework rather than in a purely legalistic manner. This provided the groundwork for the holding of the National Conference on the Kaingin Problem in 1965. The recommendations made in these consultative assemblies were crucial in crafting the Forest Occupancy Management Program. This program represented the earliest effort by the state to allow rural people to remain in classified forestlands under certain conditions. It was the prelude to the historical train of events leading to the adoption of policy measures designed to devolve, even in a partial manner, certain rights to local communities (see Table 2).

The passage of Forestry Administrative Order No. 62, otherwise known as the Kaingin Management and Land Settlement Regulations, inaugurated the Forest Occupancy Management Program in 1971. This marked the gradual shift from the official posture of ejecting mountain residents towards a policy of tolerating their
presence in forest zones. The program was inaugurated in order to prevent the further expansion of swidden farms. Through the grant of forest occupancy permits, villagers were allowed to continue their resource activities provided that they agree to be resettled in public lands where the forests have been exhausted. Those who refused relocation, on the other hand, were expected to implement resource protection plans, designed by forest officials, and limit the scope of agricultural cultivation.  

In a sense, the Forest Occupancy Management Program was an effort to regulate swidden farming through the controlled devolution of rights to utilize individual land parcels not exceeding seven hectares per family, together with the attached responsibilities to conserve adjacent forestlands. In response to civil society demands to address the social and economic dimensions behind forest occupation, individual families were given two-year permits to undertake livelihood activities. Such efforts were to be pursued through the application of agroforestry, tree farming, and soil conservation technologies. The limitations of the program were obvious. The forest permits provided short-term tenure and covered a restricted number of families. A top-down approach was employed in program implementation with target clients seen as beneficiaries of technical assistance rather than as active participants in the development process. Despite its deficiencies, the program opened a policy window for addressing the resource utilization rights of forest occupants.

With its limited focus on providing permits to individual parcels of land, the Forest Occupancy Management Program failed to recognize the importance of communal arrangements in reconciling conservation and livelihood concerns in the upland areas. It took the concerted efforts of a local association of tribal people in Nueva Vizcaya to push government to devolve forest management to the local community.

A major change in policy orientation came in 1974 when the Kalanguya people organized and secured officially sanctioned tenure and management rights over parts of their ancestral domain in the Caraballo Sur highlands. They did so with the assistance of a missionary leader, Delbert Rice, who developed close relations with government agencies and NGOs in Manila. It was the first time that local villagers were recognized by the state as having legitimate claims over the use and control of forestland. However, the twenty-five-year communal forest lease agreement negotiated by the Kalanguya community was not immediately used as a basis for expanding local people’s participation in managing the forest. Instead, the government moved cautiously in introducing social forestry programs that acknowledge occupancy rights for upland dwellers on a very limited scale, with the aim of controlling local resource practices rather than strengthening local control over forest resources.

The effort to harness the energies of local villagers in government forestry projects continued with the initiation of the Communal Tree Farming Program in 1978. Its main objective was the cultivation of tree farms in every municipality in the country. This reforestation thrust was anchored on the crafting of cooperative linkages between state agencies, local communities, and the private sector. In 1979, another program called the Family Approach to Reforestation was inaugurated. Patterned after the Burmese taungya system, the program focused on the provision of short-term contracts for families to set up tree plantations on public land. Participating
Table 2. Policy Matrix under the Limited Devolution Phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Kaingin Management and Land Settlement Regulations (Forestry Administrative Order No. 62)</td>
<td>In this policy, the focus was placed on the containment rather than punishment of forest occupants. Kaingineros or slash and burn cultivators were allowed to remain in public forestland provided they undertake soil conservation and tree farming activities in fixed sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Forestry Reform Code (Presidential Decree No. 705)</td>
<td>Kaingineros, squatters, and other occupants who entered forest zones before May 1975 shall not be prosecuted provided that they do not expand their clearings and that they undertake forest protection activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Communal Tree Farming Program</td>
<td>Every city and municipality in the country were expected to establish tree farms. Reforestation in open and denuded forestlands were to be undertaken through the involvement of forest occupants, civic organizations, and municipal government units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Family Approach to Reforestation</td>
<td>The Bureau of Forest Development can enter into short-term contracts with families to set up tree plantations in public land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Integrated Social Forestry Program (Letter of Instruction No. 1260)</td>
<td>Participants in the program are granted the right to occupy and develop forest areas for a period of 25 years, renewable for another 25 years, through the issuance of a stewardship agreement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
families could interplant agricultural crops on the land until the trees were firmly established. They were paid in installments for each tree seedling surviving after two to three years and a lump sum at the end of the program. The three programs fared way below expectations. By 1981, the area covered by these programs totaled only 33,000 hectares. These programs failed because of the technical and regulatory difficulties faced by a forestry bureau shackled by an acute lack of financial and human resources. However, beyond these bureaucratic concerns, the success of social forestry programs may very well depend on the political will to overcome institutional obstacles that hinder the full participation of the target population in planning and implementation processes.30

Ironically, martial law, imposed by Marcos in 1972, pushed the government to review its policies on upland dwellers. Civil society opposition to authoritarian rule and the efforts of the New People’s Army to set up rebel camps in the forest zones intensified the competition for citizen support in the rural areas. For example, the Communal Tree Farming Program attempted to recruit forest occupants, cooperatives, and local government units to undertake reforestation activities in denuded areas. Faced with opposition from militant civil society organizations, the martial law government sought to gain political capital in the rural areas by packaging reforestation projects as sources of income and employment.

With the exception of the KEF forestry project in Nueva Vizcaya, the social forestry initiatives in the 1970s were characterized by the miniscule authority given to upland villagers. Forest dwellers were still largely seen by the state as bearers of destructive resource practices whose actions ought to be closely controlled and monitored. They were given roles as implementors of reforestation programs, but their involvement was basically contractual in nature. Without land tenure incentive schemes, the early social forestry programs failed to encourage local people in pursuing long-term forest conservation initiatives. The incapacity of corporate forestry to engage in the sustainable management of forest resources has prompted efforts to devolve the management of forest zones to local communities. However, devolution measures were also encouraged by the failure of community activities within the context of prior attempts to involve communities, but did not devolve authority. For example, forest residents contracted by the DENR to undertake reforestation activities ended up burning the forest due to delayed salaries and the absence of tenure rights in reforested areas.

In the early 1980s, the democratically inclined voluntary groups took an oppositionist stance against the government even as a limited section of civil society engaged reform advocates in the Bureau of Forest Development to democratize access to forest resources. The Upland Development Working Group was an early form of partnership between segments of government and civil society to push for upland reforms through the social forestry agenda.

The Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) Program was launched in 1982 on the basis of Letter of Instruction (LOI) 1260. In large measure, the program marked the move of Philippine forestry from purely technical concerns to issues of rural development.31 Compared to previous social forestry programs, ISF placed greater emphasis on providing land tenure to forest occupants. Under the program, upland dwellers
could secure Certificate of Stewardship Contracts (CSCs) giving them exclusive use and occupancy rights to public forestland for twenty-five years, which is renewable for another twenty-five-year period. Individuals, families, and local communities, including indigenous groups, residing or cultivating land in the forest area may enter into stewardship agreements with the government. The program was mandated to render assistance to forest occupants in developing and improving the ecological health of open and denuded forestlands by planting a combination of agricultural crops and tree species. As part of their stewardship function, CSC holders were expected to engage in the application of soil conservation, suppression of forest fires, and conservation of forest growth in their areas of responsibility. In addition, individual CSC recipients were persuaded to constitute themselves into local associations and cooperatives.


With the ascendancy of Corazon Aquino to the Philippine presidency in 1986, following the overthrow of the Marcos government, the clamor for bureaucratic change spilled into the forestry sector. In 1987, a new Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was created under Executive Order No. 192. The BFD, which operated as a mini-fiefdom in the past, was renamed into the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) and reduced into a staff organization of the new department. Named as secretary of the DENR in 1987 was human rights lawyer Fulgencio Factoran Jr., who brought with him a management team consisting of development technocrats and NGO leaders to oversee the agency’s transition from a purely regulatory body into an active development agent. In line with this agenda, the DENR pursued a decentralization program aimed at transferring significant planning and decision-making authority to the regions, provinces, and even to communities. Personnel were redeployed and financial resources were reallocated in support of field operations. Another bureaucratic innovation undertaken during this period was the setting up of an NGO desk as part of the Special Concerns Office of the DENR in order to facilitate consultative and participatory processes involving civil society groups. Consequently, regional NGO desks were established in the department’s regional offices. Bureaucratic changes in the forestry sector in the post-Marcos period contributed not only to the cancellation of the logging permits of irresponsible concessionaires but also to the reinvigoration of efforts to provide forest tenure to upland villagers through the expansion of social and community forestry programs.

In 1987, the DENR with financial support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) established an ambitious National Forestation Program slated to last fourteen years. In the rush to implement a giant program, reforestation contracts were awarded in a haphazard fashion. During this time, many “fly-by-night” NGOs were hurriedly established for the purpose of joining contract reforestation ventures. In this context, odd variants of NGOs proliferated. For example, elite NGOs were created to channel financial resources to
Forest Devolution and Social Capital

reap profits on the back of sociodevelopment projects considering the enormous expansion of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Many types of rent-seeking NGOs formed by local governments, bureaucrats, and politicians emerged. Phantom NGOs, on the other hand, were established to take advantage of tax shelters. Unfortunately, these instant organizations undercut and compromised the advocacy of genuine NGOs undertaking capacity-building and organizing activities with forest-dependent communities. The prevalent construction of NGOs as intermediary and functional agents of conservation and people’s empowerment is not always true considering the wide variety of NGOs as civil society players.

In a bid to accelerate the transfer of residual forestlands under community management, the Community Forestry Program (CFP) was installed with the DENR’s issuance of Department Administrative Order (DAO) No. 123 in 1989. Through renewable twenty-five-year Community Forest Management Agreements (CFMAs), local communities were awarded resource utilization privileges and, at the same time, tasked with management responsibilities in residual forest areas. Over the past decade, expired, abandoned, and canceled timber concessions have turned vast areas of logged-over forestland into open-access areas. In this context, the CFP aims to arrest the speedy liquidation of the remaining forest assets in these areas by granting long-term management rights to organized forest communities. The program emphasizes the important role of NGOs in organizing and training community residents in the pursuit of forest conservation and livelihood projects.

The CFP was intended to harness the collaborative efforts of rural communities, civil society associations, and government in the pursuit of equity and conservation in forest management. NGOs were relied upon to assist communities in the various phases of training, organization, and operations. Considering that several “communities” coexist in many forest areas, the assisting NGOs were normally confronted with the task of mediating conflicts and building social capital to mobilize people for collective action purposes.

Social forestry projects were devolved to local government units (LGUs) in 1993, as provided for under the Local Government Code, except for model ISF sites and communal forest areas exceeding fifty square kilometers that remain under the supervision of the DENR. LGUs could apply for the management of small watersheds. Reforestation programs could also be undertaken under local jurisdiction. Under the code, LGUs could play an active role in the enforcement of forestry laws, rules, and regulations.

The DENR and LGUs need to stabilize linkages especially to ensure the continuity of community forestry that are to be turned over to local executives. In the early phase of the devolution process, the coordination between the DENR and LGUs was quite weak. It was observed that the DENR did not sufficiently prepare LGUs for devolution as manifested in the lack of training and capacity-building programs. In terms of law enforcement, the roles and functions of LGUs vis-à-vis the DENR have not been clearly defined at the LGU level.

The Local Government Code is a landmark legislation with great potentials for enhancing civil society participation in local decision-making processes. However, its enforcement presents a good case for inquiring into the role of government-
Table 3. Policy Matrix under the Multi-Modal Devolution Phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Reorganization of the DENR (Executive Order No. 192)</td>
<td>The DENR is mandated as the primary government agency responsible for the sustainable management of the country’s natural resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>General Rules and Regulations on the Participation of NGOs in DENR Programs (DENR Administrative Order No. 120)</td>
<td>The DENR shall encourage and promote the participation of NGOs in natural resources development, management, and protection. A National NGO Desk is tasked to accredit NGOs qualified to participate in DENR programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Community Forestry Program (DENR Administrative Order No. 123)</td>
<td>The Community Forestry Management Agreement (CFMA) is awarded to a rural community for a period of 25 years, renewable for another 25 years. Forest utilization privileges are given to the community which is expected to prepare a development plan and adhere to the principles of sustained-yield management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Local Government Code (Republic Act No. 7160)</td>
<td>The implementation of social forestry and reforestation initiatives, the management of communal forests not exceeding 5,000 ha, the protection of small watershed areas, and the enforcement of forest laws are devolved to local government units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (Republic Act No. 7586)</td>
<td>The law represents a shift from a state-controlled mode of park administration towards a system of protected area management where indigenous communities and local associations are involved. A site-based Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), composed of representatives from the DENR, local government units, NGOs, and tribal groups, deliberate over land use plans, zoning measures, and resource activities in priority protected areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Delineation of Ancestral Lands and Domain Claims (DENR Administrative Order No. 2)</td>
<td>Provincial Special Task Forces on Ancestral Domains (PSTFAD) are mandated to meet with indigenous communities for the purpose of verifying ancestral domain claims and identifying forest boundaries. Once their claims are approved, indigenous communities are granted Certificates of Ancestral Domain Certificates (CADCS).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Forest Devolution and Social Capital

society interactions in actualizing participatory processes. For example, not all LGUs have formed Environment and Natural Resources Councils (ENRCs) as a special body for engaging civil society in local governance. Where civil society is strong, LGUs have been pressured to establish special bodies and interagency structures for better communication and cooperation in the area of forest protection. In other places, instead of ENRCs, similar bodies have been created such as the Provincial Environment and Concerns Commission in Negros Occidental, the Multi-Sectoral Forest Protection Committee, and the Federation of Upland Farmers in Nueva Vizcaya.

Local communities, especially those that are well organized, have taken initiatives to protect the forest through setting up community checkpoints as in the case of the Vibanara Multi-Purpose Cooperative of Ilagan, Isabela. The cooperative signed a 1994 CFMA contract with the DENR to manage 4,845 hectares in a site formerly held by TLA concessionaires. The cooperative has formed forest protection teams that have helped in the confiscation of illegally cut timber. Part of their revenue has been invested in alternative sustainable livelihoods, such as goat and hog raising, and provided credit assistance to its members through the Land Bank. These loans have been fully paid, and today the cooperative has assets worth P1.2 million and its membership has grown to 287 individuals.39 These community efforts are being replicated in many parts of the country.

The promotion of community-based forest management was also the intention behind the creation of the Forest Land Management Agreement (FLMA). It enables local communities that have successfully complied with the terms of a reforestation contract with the DENR to maintain custody of the land for a twenty-five-year period, which could be renewed for another twenty-five years. In exchange for harvesting privileges in the reforested areas, FLMA recipients are expected to reimburse the government for its initial investments in site development, reforest the harvested areas, and conduct forest protection activities. Similar to the CFP, NGOs are mobilized in providing organizational and training assistance to communities in the performance of forest management duties.

Advocacy explosion can emanate from many sources. Different kinds of groups responded to particular events: the growth of adversary groups, changes in the law, and evolutionary changes in the political environment. These stimuli can also be enhanced by a cumulative learning process. For effective lobbying, policy expertise is important. The ability to network or form coalitions, to utilize the media, and to develop lasting professional relationships with staffers and policymakers are other well-known fundamentals of lobbying.40

In 1992, Republic Act No. 7586, otherwise known as the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act was passed. The law acknowledged the crucial role of communities in the delimitation of boundaries and management of protected areas. For the first time, the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands are acknowledged in a national statute. A more serious strategic move to recognize the legal role of indigenous communities in governing the forest was made in 1993 when the DENR passed DAO No. 2 (Series of 1993). This administrative order outlines the procedures for indigenous cultural communities to delineate
and register their claims to ancestral lands and domains. Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements and procedures in DAO No. 2, a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) or a Certificate of Ancestral Land Claim (CALC) is issued to the applicant.41

The proliferation of tenure instruments has moved policy analysts to propose the need to simplify land tenure options in community forest management.42 Yet, by 1993, CSFAs cover only 76,628 hectares.43 In 1994, only fifty-nine communities had received CFMAs, representing below 120,000 hectares. Considering this scale of activity, an estimated six hundred communities would be required to satisfy the Master Plan for Forestry Development goal of placing 1.5 million hectares of forestland under community management.44 These suggest enormous opportunities for the further expansion of community forestry in the Philippines.

Institutionalization Phase (1995–Present)

In 1995, President Fidel Ramos signed the Executive Order No. 263 (EO 263), which mandated community-based forest management as the national strategy to ensure the sustainable development of the country’s forest resources. Subsequently, the rules and regulations for the implementation of EO 263 was issued by the DENR through Department Administrative Order No. 96-29 (DAO 96-29). In line with these key policy decisions, the DENR designed a strategic action plan entitled “Moving CBFM Into The 21st Century.”

The CBFM strategy may be seen as a response to the need to integrate projects into a comprehensive program. In administrative terms, the project implementation units at the central and field offices will be consolidated into CBFM units. On the ground, integration of CBFM sites will be pursued with the identification of the watersheds as the basic forest land management unit. Overlaps between existing ISFP, CFP, FLMP (Forest Land Management Program), and ADMP (Ancestral Domain Management Program) sites will be addressed through their integration into such CBFM sites following a unified, CENRO-level CBFM implementation plan. The tenure instruments will also be consolidated. In this regard, the CBFMA shall be granted in place of the following: Certificate of Community Forest Stewardship issued to community organizations under the ISFP; Mangrove Stewardship Agreements issued to community organizations under the CEP; the Community Forest Management Agreements issued under the CFP, Rain-fed Resource Management Program (RRMP), and Integrated Resource Management Program (IRMP); and the Forest Management Agreements issued under the FLMP. The CBFMA shall also be the tenure instrument to be issued to POS in allowable zones within protected areas.

The difficulties confronted in the devolution of forest resource management to local governments and communities are enormous. When the ISF projects were devolved to local governments, many of them had neither the commitment nor the capacity to embark on local forest management responsibilities. In this regard, local governments have to be convinced and trained in governing the forest. Community forestry advocates have to be active in lobbying for forest governance innovations at the local level. In the case of community forestry instruments issued by the
DENR, there may be conflicts arising from the problem of determining whether the party that received forest tenure is actually representative of the entire community. When a small percentage of the community actually has tenure in a forest area, then non-members in a community forestry area might undertake resource uses that could result in disputes. In this regard, social capital has to be mobilized even before a community forestry agreement is signed to accurately define the parameters for exercising forest governance in a given area. In many occasions, community norms and social capital may have to be cultivated especially in open access conditions operating in canceled logging concession areas. Here, social norms and organizing tools have to be harnessed to prepare the people in the area to shift towards community forest management. In this context, the right mix of civil society–state partnership has to be formed in forging community-based cooperation in governing the forest.

Civil society associations participated in the discussions and consultations leading to the passage of the Indigenous People’s Rights Act (IPRA). Sponsored by Senator Juan Flavier, Republic Act No. 8371 originated from House Bill No. 9125 and Senate Bill No. 1728. Among the allies of the indigenous communities that applied pressure in seeking to influence the content of IPRA were CSOs such as the Upland NGO Assistance Committee (UNAC), a network of NGOs involved in upland development concerns. UNAC was actively involved in the deliberation of the Senate version of the bill. IPRA recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to return to, own, develop, and stay on their ancestral domains and lands. In this regard, indigenous communities could apply for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), converting a DENR-issued CADC into a CADT, and availing of the Public Land Act to gain a Torrens Title. The law also guarantees the basic indigenous peoples’ rights such as equal protection, nondiscrimination, and respect for cultural integrity. To implement these provisions, a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples was created. The IPRA, however, has been challenged in court. A former justice of the Supreme Court has filed a plea to declare the law as unconstitutional on the premise that it violates the Regalian Doctrine. CSOs have started to mobilize to defend the IPRA as it is now under scrutiny by the highest court of the land.

**Conclusion**

The policy shift towards devolution in forest governance was a product of state-society interactions. In this regard, the state had many faces in various levels of governance that created opportunities as well as constraints in policy engagement. Even during the martial law period, pockets of resistance to forest centralization within the bureaucracy existed. In the early 1980s, civil society advocates of forest devolution linked up with their government counterparts. Together, they formed an Upland Development Working Group that pushed for policy reforms in the forestry sector. With the support of a donor agency, they undertook joint activities. The lessons experienced and innovations generated from the implementation of people-based forestry programs were documented. These provided inputs in pushing for improvements in the quality of participation in social forestry projects.
Through long years of experience in working together, social capital was formed between government personnel from the Social Forestry Division and members of NGOs and academe. The core of civil society groups in this partnership would later form the Upland NGO Assistance Committee. Certainly the strong bonds of trust and cooperation across segments of civil society and government enlivened the advocacy to widen the limited scope of forest devolution in the 1980s.

In general, a strong policy framework on forest devolution exists in the country. Through an executive order issued in 1995, community-based forest management has been declared as the national strategy for the sustainable management of Philippine forestlands. Forest devolution is also promoted in such laws as the 1991 Local Government Code, 1992 NIPAS Act, and the controversial 1997 IPRA Law. While the legislation of a new forestry code that embodies community rights, tenure, and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Adoption of Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) as the National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Forestlands (Executive Order No. 263)</td>
<td>CBFM is the national strategy to achieve sustainable forestry and social justice. Organized communities may be granted access to forest resources under long-term tenure provided they employ environment-friendly, ecologically sustainable, and labor-intensive harvesting methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Rules and Regulations for the Implementation of the CBFM Strategy (DENR Administrative Order No. 96)</td>
<td>Local communities shall prepare their respective Community Resource Management Frameworks with the assistance of the DENR, local government units, NGOs, and other government agencies. The CBFM program shall apply to all areas classified as forestlands including allowable zones within protected areas. It integrates all people-oriented forestry programs of the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371)</td>
<td>The state shall protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral domains to ensure their economic, social, and cultural well being. It shall also recognize the applicability of customary laws governing property relations in determining the ownership and extent of ancestral domain. Indigenous peoples whose ancestral domains have been officially delineated and determined by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples shall be issued a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) in the name of the community concerned, containing a list of all those identified in the census.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participation in forest governance may be preferable, the prevailing policy matrix already provides a favorable context in pursuing community forestry efforts. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of forest devolution would still rely in the long run to the preparedness and capacity of local communities to exercise forest authority and management functions.

Upgrading the capacity of local people and their organizations to govern the forest is of primary importance. The skills that are required are not only technical but also social in character. Local communities are expected to be adept not only in agro-forestry and enterprise management but also in negotiating resource conflicts inside and outside the community. They need organizing skills and a vast reservoir of social capital in order to mobilize local citizens in designing community resource management frameworks and implementing resource use plans and ancestral domain management plans on the part of indigenous communities. Community residents should also be vigilant in ensuring that transparency and democratic participation is exercised in the management of devolved forest zones.

Francisco Magno is associate professor of political science and the director of the Social Development Research Center at De La Salle University in Manila, Philippines. He has conducted research in the areas of social capital, environmental movements, and local governance. The National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) of the Philippines named him Outstanding Young Scientist for the year 2000 in the field of political science.

Notes

2. Locating the state in its specific social environment requires an understanding of the mutually transforming quality of state-society relations. This perspective is reflected in the case studies included in Joel Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
3. In rejecting the tendency to view politics as a simple reflection of society, the need to distinguish the state (authority) from society (association) is underscored in Reinhard Bendix, Nation Building and Citizenship (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
8. Ibid., 321.
11. Social capital could be restructured and realigned in the face of challenges to local systems of trust and cooperation. According to Ben Malayang III, the local people’s rising dependence on inorganic fertilizers, which are used as inputs in vegetable farms have led to a situation where the chemical companies are more trusted than the village elders in rendering advice on resource management techniques in Loo Valley. This was raised during the Roundtable Discussion on Devolution and Local Forest Management held at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, December 10, 1998.
13. DENR Circular No. 3 (Series of 1990) contains the rules on the acceptance, identification, evaluation, and delineation of ancestral land claims by the special task force created by virtue of DENR Special Order Nos. 31 and 31-A, both issued in 1990.
14. Members of indigenous cultural communities who are and had been in possession of their ancestral lands or through their predecessors-in-interest for at least the last fifty years shall be presumed to possess the land since time immemorial.
17. See DENR Administrative Order No. 2 (Series of 1993) regarding the rules and regulations for the identification, delineation, and recognition of ancestral land and domain claims.


28. As evidence of their knowledge of biological diversity, the Hanunoo Mangyan were able to identify more than 100 species of rice. Harold Conklin, Hanunoo Agriculture in the Philippines (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 1957).


30. Ibid., 256.


