

An abstract painting with a textured surface. The background is a deep, vibrant blue. Overlaid on this are several large, soft-edged shapes in bright yellow and a smaller one in reddish-pink. The colors blend into each other, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a watercolor or a soft-focus photograph of light reflecting off a surface.

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Camille Tuason Mata

BEYOND LAND REFORM TO ACHIEVE RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT : THE CASE OF THE SAN JOSE AGRARIAN MUNICIPAL COOPERATIVE IN THE PHILIPPINES¹

ABSTRACT

Land reform has been viewed as a vehicle for reducing poverty, as land ownership and title rights generally enable the poor to establish food-generating projects, which help them attain some degree of socio-economic equity. Land reform has also been equated with social justice because land title renders power to independent farming, giving farmers the freedom to define their work conditions. However, the community development experience of the San Jose Agrarian Municipal Cooperative (SJAMCO) in the Philippines shows that land reform is only the first step towards equity and justice. Although the SJAMCO had title to 2.14 hectares of land, they remained food insecure. This research finds that a strong partnership, reflecting rich social capital, between the SJAMCO and federal agencies responsible for implementing land reform, is an effective way to develop a collaborative relationship, in which all parties engage in a comprehensive planning process that carefully maps out sustainable livelihood projects and strengthens community relations.

INTRODUCTION

Much of the earlier studies on poverty in low income countries have linked up land reform with poverty alleviation, suggesting that, when broadly implemented land reform is the panacea to reducing economic inequalities and the key to empowering poor households in granting land ownership or title (Herring, 1999; Food and Agriculture Organization, n.d.; Besley & Burgess, 1998). Amartya Sen (2000) interlaced entitlements, like land ownership, with poverty reduction and freedom. However, a growing body of literature has emerged, which questions the linearity of this relationship (Rohde, Benjaminsen, & Hoffman, 2001; Balisacan, 2007; Baas & Ali, 2005), showing that, while it is true that land reform secures assets to the poor, land ownership or title rights needs also to be accompanied by other factors. In illuminating the intersection of social capital and land reform, the community development experience of the San Jose Agrarian Municipal Cooperative (SJAMCO), a peri-urban agriculture cooperative in Mindanao Island, the Philippines, contributes to this growing body of literature. The SJAMCO's case illustrates that alleviating poverty conditions and achieving sustainable livelihoods for the household members would be better accomplished by creating and nurturing a strong partnership between government and community, exemplified by collaborative networks that establish trust and promote a comprehensive community development planning process.

The community development goal of the SJAMCO households was to secure food with livelihood projects from which they could harvest sufficient volumes of foods for consumption and income. However, they were not able to complete their nascent livelihood projects in large part because the vertical relationship that would have brought about collaboration between community and government, reflected weak social capital. Resultantly, they have not made the transition from food insecurity to food security despite having gained 2.14 hectares of land from the passage of former President Corazon Aquino's land reform initiative, the 1988 Comprehensive Agrarian Reform law (Republic Act 6657). In this paper, I trace the reasons to two factors: (1) failed collaboration between government and community, evident in the absence of a community planning process in the livelihood-building stages after winning land title, and (2) the lack of political legitimacy for not meeting the quorum standard of fifteen household members. These factors are the basis for weak social capital between community and government. If the relevant government officials had engaged the households in the community planning process, they might have identified how the households could have begun moving out of poverty and towards food security. Along the same lines, if the households had met quorum standards, they would have received a stronger commitment from the government since complying with the "rules" indicates reciprocity on the part of the community. The presence of these social capital dimensions would likely have built up the trust and resulting productivity that so aptly characterizes strong social capital relations (Wilson, 1996, 1997; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Fukuyama, 1999, 2002). Instead, the SJAMCO households harbored suspicion because they perceived the government as playing political games. The experience of the SJAMCO households reinforces the argument that land access is only the first step towards achieving food security.

This research relied heavily on focus groups, household, and individual interviews. The household participants were members of the SJAMCO community. Two focus group interviews were held with all the members to understand (1) the historical development of the SJAMCO community, (2) the bottlenecks in the community development efforts, and (3) the problems associated with SJAMCO's relationship with government agencies. The heads of households were then interviewed to ascertain their level of food security. I also conducted interviews with four volunteer community organizers for the Partnership for Human Rights and Development (PaHRD), a priest with the Arch Diocese Church of

Valencia City, and two government officials, which disclosed the differences in perspectives between the SJAMCO members and the federal agencies regarding the reasons behind the incompletion of the livelihood projects. These individual and focus group interviews brought to light the obstacles to poverty alleviation, despite land reform, in the context of weak social capital ties between the government and community.

This paper is organized as follows: the first section illustrates the various approaches to defining social capital and explains the community benefits generated when social capital is abundant. The second section presents the difficulty the SJAMCO household members faced in reaching food security without engaging them in the community planning process, and describes the rationale behind the formation of the SJAMCO. The third section examines land reform's ambiguous connection to poverty alleviation, highlighting the important role community planning can play in building up social capital between community and government. Finally, the discussion section derives four learning principles from the SJAMCO's community development experience, tying the value of social capital into the collaborative partnerships that promote comprehensive planning, into community empowerment, and into long-term social and economic sustainability.

I. The Value of Social Capital for Community Development

In very broad terms, social capital is grounded in a collective, social identity, which materializes as a complex network of public associations of mutual recognition or acquaintances between neighbors, groups, and institutions (Fukuyama, 1999; Putnam, 1993; Franke, 2005). In the most ideal form, social capital is said to be holistic and inclusive, conditions under which individuals feel motivated to perpetuate several dimensions of public participation and civic engagement (Franke, 2005, p. 2; Wilson, 1997): feelings of trust, the lubricant of social capital (Putnam, 1993) inspire acts of cooperation, information sharing, and collaboration between actors, leading to behaviors that induce reciprocity.² The abundance of these networks create the spiritual connectedness between community residents, that is, the emotional aspects of social capital which increase inter-personal trust, motivating community members to share resources, information, and give assistance to each other. The strength of the trust, the sharing, and overall the internal cohesion propagated among community members through investing in the network ultimately begets what Osberg (2003) called a "bonding effect" (p.45).³ Bowles and Gintis (2003), in an economic paper studying the costs and benefits of networks sustained through parochial contacts, called this type of bonding 'parochialism'.⁴ They argued that within parochial systems, social capital is a normative feature and, therefore, is regarded as a preventative antidote against the dissolution of trust in the community (p. 6). The magnitude of social capital's benefits is conditional upon the strength of the networks, therein.

Other scholars have made note of accumulated benefits generated from the rich presence of social capital. Grootaert (1998) and Wilson (1996, 1997) highlighted social capital's impact on economic prosperity. Grootaert (1998) pointed out that villagers bound to each other through informal networks such as "friendship" associations in Ukraine could stabilize their fragile economic conditions (pp.7-14). Exchanges or reciprocities, such as bartering or giving without expecting compensation, between friends or associates are necessities in Ukraine's asset-starved economy because these networks help poor households survive. Correspondingly, Wilson (1996) observed that in a trust-based economy, the economy can be more than stable – it can be prosperous. An abundance of social capital networks causes individuals to join forces and engage in collaborative business ventures that mold project management processes, such as community development and community forums, from

which arise material outcomes like community benefits agreements, memoranda of understanding, jobs, investments, and income. The productivity visible during prosperity allows the poor to overcome joblessness, which would otherwise become burdensome if social capital were weak.

The value of an environment rich in social capital is apparent in studies juxtaposing societies exhibiting high levels of social capital against those manifesting low levels. The latter incubates political, social, and economic dysfunctions between individuals and across communities because it lacks vast networks of trust (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Fukuyama, 1999, pp.3-5). Under sparse social capital conditions, violence and manipulative behaviors are outcomes. In other scenarios, households may plunge deeper into poverty, hunger, or other socio-economic depressions. Residents may thereby choose not to interact with each other, creating little opportunity for enriching social interactions.

Another impact of lack of social capital is distance from and separation of communities from government institutions and centers of power. This type of isolation erects barriers between government agencies and communities, disconnecting the former from the community's needs and inhibiting socio-economic improvements. With isolation, social capital weaknesses rest in the macro, vertical networks between government and community. But, as Fukuyama (2002) wrote: *it is not sufficient to go into a [community], note the existence of networks, label it social capital, and pronounce it a good thing . . . needed are (sic) more modern, broad-radius-organizations that connect across traditional ethnic, class, or status boundaries and serve as the basis for modern political and economic organizations* (p. 34). Social capital is more the result of extending and nurturing human and institutional relationships, rather than being a state of superficial, simple everyday interactions that, in my interpretation, one would see at a grocery store or at a cocktail party.

In the case of the Philippines, weak social capital is reflected in a culture of elitism that sustains a government-society hierarchy in which government does not, in practice, collaborate – that is, coordinate knowledge, skills, funds, and best practices – with community groups as a vehicle for generating socio-economic benefits to members of that community. Although times are changing, patronage continues to be a major determinant of social capital in the Philippines, as are patron-client relationships (Sison, 2006; Sidel, 1999). Patronage relationships involve the extension of benefits or regulated rights from the patron, a person holding a position of power, to individuals or groups (client) in exchange for their loyalty and compliance. In Philippine political culture, these relationships become more entrenched when transacted in the public political domain because Filipino citizens see political service as the government's role, preferring instead to "retreat into their 'private' lives" and let the government take care of policy details (Sison, 2006, p. 12). Though patron-client connections are difficult to challenge in Philippine society, the introduction of foreign non-profits, research co-operations between university and government, churches, and/or local advocacy organizations into community-based work has helped to dilute the rigidity of the patron-client nexus to some extent. These entities can operate as effective negotiators between government and community because they offer something (knowledge, training, etc.) at little or no cost to the government, which earns them status and respect.⁵ Nonetheless, the culturally embedded hierarchical value system continues to distance the government from the full scope of collaborative practices necessary for identifying direct needs and making progress on poverty alleviation projects.

The case of the San Jose Agrarian Municipal Cooperative (SJAMCO), a peri-urban agriculture cooperative in Mindanao Island whose households received land title but did not benefit from a community planning process, is a classic example of this isolation. A community planning process

incorporating community forums, where SJAMCO household members could (1) articulate their visions of productive, livelihood projects that produce food continuously, and (2) identify stages of progress consisting of measurements benchmarks, which signify states of accomplishments, could have further aided the community in envisioning the pathway(s) towards their goals of food security. However, as I show in this paper, the relevant government actors did not guide them through the planning process. Thus, the SJAMCO households lost the opportunity to develop a road map steering them towards a food-secure future. In the next section, I establish the rationale underlying land reform and social capital building by describing the scope and depth of poverty in the Quezon Municipality and its surrounding *barangays*.

II. Hunger and Poverty in the Quezon Municipality: A Rationale for Community Development

Before the 1988 Comprehensive Agrarian Land Reform Law (CARL) in the Philippines, the SJAMCO households were employed as farmers for the Sunshine Farms *hacienda* (farm plantation). After the passage of the law, the SJAMCO households received land title to 2.14 hectares with the help of the Partnership for Human Rights and Development (PaHRD)⁶, a non-profit advocacy group based at the Archdiocese Church of Valencia City (Mindanao, Philippines). Land title represented freedom from the difficult working conditions they endured while employed at Sunshine Farms. The new law further signified an opportunity to establish self-sustaining livelihoods.

A Socio-economic Snapshot of the Quezon Municipality

The most common indicators used to give a picture of poverty in a region are (1) incidence of poverty among households⁷ and (2) poverty income threshold. In Bukidnon Province (Mindanao Island), where both Quezon Municipality and San Jose *Barangay* (the home of the SJAMCO) are located, the annual poverty income threshold per capita was only about PhP12,186 (US\$285)⁸ per annum in 2006. Poverty incidence among families was 29.6% of the total population, slightly higher than the national average of 26.9%. Generally speaking, these indicators convey the job climate of the region and the quality of life, as they were linked to families' ability to purchase foods, farm inputs, and other basic-needs increments.

In Quezon Municipality, the jobs were largely concentrated in farming and manufacturing, two important commercial sectors in Quezon Municipality. The manufacturing sector employed about 800 people in the Municipality (Figure 1). It consisted of a piggery, a corn and rice mill, an organic fertilizer, a vulcanizing welding industry, the Naredico Logging Company, and the Bukidnon Sugar Company (BUSCO), the largest employer in the area. Other types of businesses included lending institutions, public markets, commercial retail centers, and *sari-sari* (mom-and-pop) stores (Quezon CLUP, 1999-09, p. 38). The farming industry specialized in growing the export crops corn, rice, and sugarcane. In terms

FIGURE 1. Breakdown of Employee by Industry

| Industry | Number of Employees |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| BUSCO | 607 |
| Organic Fertilizer Industry | 5 |
| Vulcanizing Welding | 40 |
| Commercial Poultry | 2 |
| Commercial Piggery | 8 |
| Rice Mill | 80 |
| Corn Mill | 80 |

Source: Quezon CLUP, 1999-09

of sales receipts, the sugarcane industry (constituting 11.25% of the total commercial industries in Quezon) is the Municipality’s greatest asset, having garnered Php502,695,000 (US\$11,600) in 2000 (Quezon CLUP, 1999-09, p. 87).

The employment opportunities offered by the farming and commercial industries attracted a number of migrants from around the region to join the earliest indigenous settlers of the Manobos, the Talaandigs, the Higa-onons, and the Bukidnons. The biggest movement of migrants into the Municipality occurred between 1970 and 1975, which showed a growth spurt of 38.6%, after the BUSCO and the Naredico Logging Company invested in the area (Figure 2) (Quezon CLUP 1999-09, p. 22-24).⁹

| FIGURE 2. Population Trends Table, 1970-1995 | | | |
|--|------------|----------|-------------|
| Year | Population | Increase | Growth Rate |
| 1970 | 38,084 | ----- | ---- |
| 1975 | 52,324 | 14,240 | 6.56% |
| 1980 | 59,819 | 7,495 | 2.71% |
| 1990 | 70,239 | 10,420 | 3.26% |
| 1995 | 74,141 | 3,902 | 1.09% |

Source: Quezon CLUP, 1999-09

However, much of Filipino labor is still bound up in agriculture in spite of the rise of commercial industries and the trend towards urbanization. The numerous *haciendas* in the area were evidence that farm work was one of the primary occupations (see Image 1 below). Don Fortich, the wealthy owner of a multitude of large-scale *haciendas*, propagated this farming model when he arrived in the early 1920s to permanently settle in Quezon, leaving a legacy that remains visible today.¹⁰ Reliance on patronage from the *hacienda* owner enabled the farmers to scrape by, but inadequate wages and harsh working conditions forced them to reside in shacks along the edges of the *haciendas*. The landlessness and poverty of the farmers placed them in a weak bargaining position to demand better working conditions and wages, circumstances under which the 1988 Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law was passed. This law aimed to ameliorate farmers’ poverty by allocating to them land allotments, where they can cultivate livelihood projects for income and for consumption.



IMAGE 1. Sugarcane Hacienda near the SJAMCO PUA Village. *Source: Camille Tuason Mata.*

The Beginnings of the SJAMCO Peri-Urban Agriculture Community

The poverty of Quezon Municipality was mirrored in San Jose Barangay and the life conditions of the SJAMCO households. The poverty of San Jose *barangay* was marked strongly by a weak economy and run-down infrastructure. The roads throughout the *barangay* are unpaved, aggravated by protruding

rocks and deep potholes carved out by torrential rains. And, like most of Quezon Municipality, the economy was farm-based, albeit displayed a small cluster of agriculture manufacturing industries. Corn and sugar *haciendas*, *sari-sari* stores, a rice mill, and a corn grits store were the main employers (Quezon CLUP, 1999-09, p. 34). Moreover, water was a scarcity throughout the *barangay*. One main point source, the Luan Luan Springs, serviced different *barangays* in the Municipality, but it only provided about 956,300 liters of water per day. In San Jose *Barangay*, only 64% of the total households were served (Quezon CLUP, 1999-09, p. 162), and they had to obtain their water from a communal faucet.

The SJAMCO households' poverty was reflected in the uncomfortable conditions of their homes, in their food shed, and in their unsanitary lifestyle (see Image 2 and Figure 3 below). Some of the houses were built directly on the dirt with wood from the forest, while others were balanced on stilts to protect them from the flooding caused by heavy down pours during rainy season. One toilet serving the entire community was a simple hole in the ground covered by a Japanese porcelain toilet seat. Because there was no central sewerage system, the residents could not dispose of waste in a sanitary manner, thus exposing the residents to a number of transmittable pathogens. Most of the 2.14 hectares the households received was dedicated primarily to growing cash crops in order to make payments on their farm loans, rather than on cultivating the crops grown for self-consumption. Sugarcane, the biggest earner, was sold to BUSCO, while corn was sold at school or on the roadside. A smaller plot of land was reserved for subsistence crops, such as *camote* (squash), *mungo* (mung beans), *sitaw* (string beans), *calabasa* (pumpkin), or *camatis* (tomatoes).

The SJAMCO peri-urban farms are 145 kilometers north of the center of Davao and 75 kilometers south of Malaybalay, Bukidnon Province's capital city (Quezon CLUP, 1999-09, p. 5). The SJAMCO's



IMAGE 2. Dirt road leading away from the SJAMCO PUA Community. *Source: Camille Tuason Mata.*

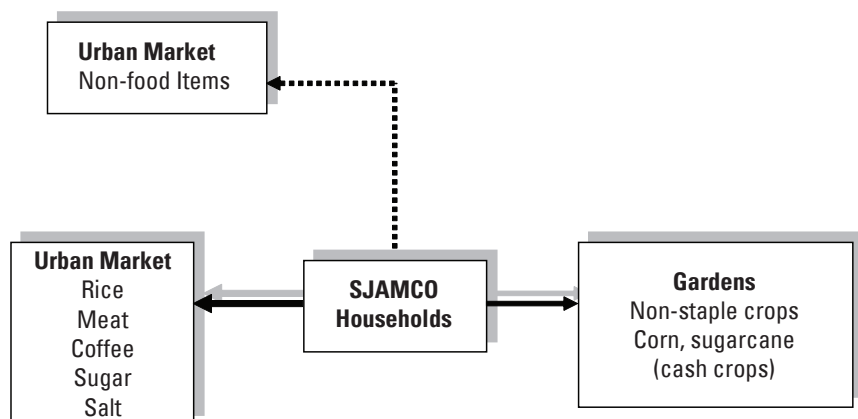


FIGURE 3. The SJAMCO Community Food Shed. *Source: Camille Tuason Mata.*

household members were employed at Sunshine Farms, but lived like squatters, earning a meager income of PhP120 (US\$2.80) per day, and with no benefits. The seasonality of work indicated little job stability because they rotated between employers after harvest seasons without guaranteed employment. The CARL was intended to assist farm workers like the SJAMCO households as a means of promoting “social justice . . . to move the nation toward sound rural development and industrialization” (Republic Act 6657, 1988, Chapter I, Section 2, par.1) by decentralizing farm cultivation into economy-sized operations.¹¹ The social justice aspect was also inherited in the decentralized model of land ownership, giving the farm workers independence and freedom from the exploitative worker conditions they faced under the hacienda ownership model. Additionally, rendering ownership of land either individually or collectively was the first step towards social and environmental sustainability for landless communities, giving greater dignity to landless farmers and poor farm workers, empowering them with the control of determining the terms of crop production, choosing their own working conditions, and receiving a more proportional compensation of foods produced on the farm.

The lands denoted in the CARL included all agricultural lands regardless of type of ownership or commodity generated (1986, Chapter II, Sec. 4)¹²; the designated beneficiaries were all farmers and farm workers as long as they were landless and expressed willingness to farm.¹³ As beneficiaries of land reform, the SJAMCO households held land title for ten years, but could re-apply to regain title within two years, thereafter. Upon receiving land, the LandBank, the lending arm of the DAR, assisted with loans for the purchase of seeds and other farm implements. The disadvantage of this lending program was the high interest rate of 6%, forcing the households to either search for supplemental employment elsewhere or to focus on growing cash crops to pay off the loan.

The SJAMCO’s battle to obtain land rights lasted four years (1995-1999) because the management at Sunshine Farms fought against their claims. The deluge of paperwork and mandatory follow-ups in ated the claims application period. Despite not having the required standard quorum of fifteen members, the PaHRD recommended the farmers form into a cooperative, so they could claim funds from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). When it became clear that the SJAMCO did not reach the fifteen households quorum, the federal agencies became resistant to relinquishing additional funds because their Cooperative was

not considered legitimate. In sum, achieving ownership of land was the first step towards achieving sustainable livelihoods and lifting community members out of poverty, but administrative and financial barriers rendered this process much more cumbersome.

III. Obstacles in Community Development

Funding and bureaucratic inertia characterized the initial attempts of the SJAMCO households at community development. At times, funding and bureaucratic obstacles were inseparable. When the SJAMCO households campaigned for additional funds to complete already-started livelihood projects, government red tape delayed the titling process and exhausted the household members. The lack of political legitimacy for not having the fifteen-member quorum also appeared to depress morale, as this status seemed to overturn what the SJAMCO members and PaHRD had already accomplished. These frustrations, however, merely compounded the food security problems facing the households; in spite of the initial monies, they produced insufficient volumes of foods. The root of their food insecurity lay in the failure to plan properly for sustainable, long-term livelihood goals.

Government's Approach to Community Development: The Obvious Initial Gaps

The government's approach to community development was incremental rather than holistic and comprehensive. Primarily, they provided seed capital and technical assistance whenever necessary. Funding appropriations in the early stages targeted nascent commercial and farming projects. The technical assistance the SJAMCO community received was in the form of a *carabao* (water buffalo) for transporting water and other materials into town and across the community, and for laying the ground for crop plantings.

Interviews with a DAR agrarian officer and a PaHRD volunteer community organizer revealed that the SJAMCO households received a combination of grants and loans for livelihood projects from the Quezon Municipal Government, the PaHRD, the DOLE, and the Governor of Quezon. Together, the SJAMCO community received amounts that ranged from PhP250 (US\$5.80) to PhP1.2 million (US\$ 27,660). The money was invested in other livelihood projects of their choosing. One investment was in a *sari sari* store, but it eventually dissolved because the community did not have the consumer base to sustain steady commercial transactions. The initial funding also catalyzed a piggery project intended to raise piglets for consumption and for sale on the local market. The SJAMCO community reserved 2000 square meters (0.28 hectares) on their land for this. However, the SJAMCO households spent much of the money on their more imminent food needs, and therefore were not able to complete or to expand on these livelihood projects to the degree at which they could produce enough food to adequately support themselves. When the government restricted the disbursements of further funds to the SJAMCO community because they were not a legitimate cooperative, tensions arose and resulted in finger pointing and blaming.

Mutuality in Complaints: Blaming the Other

Winning land title represented a milestone in the Philippine land reform, as it laid down the foundation for securing people's access to their own food production and the anticipated outcome of overturning household poverty. However, the relationship between the SJAMCO households and government agencies turned sour when progress on the livelihood projects stalled. Accounts of the reasons for the problems were different. The community's version substantiated the narratives given by the volunteer community organizers for the PaHRD, but disputed the claims of the agrarian officer assigned to their case.

One constant complaint raised during the interviews with community members was the government's reluctance to buttress the livelihood projects with additional financial support and infrastructure improvements. The households complained that the government dragged its feet instead of readily supporting the households' desire to enhance the food projects with, for instance, a poultry farm to expand their food base and income. They also felt they had contributed a tremendous amount of personal labor and money for additional necessities. To prove their sacrifices, the household members complained about having to buy supplemental seeds and about building the pig-pen themselves. The SJAMCO households further bemoaned the government's failure to help them acquire other material needs for their farms, like proper farming tools and a small truck for transporting their cash crops to BUSCO and to the San Jose *poblacion* (city center), where the crops could be sold. The money they requested to buy the truck never materialized.

Several members expressed the need for potable water for drinking and bathing. They mentioned wanting a better engineered water well because the one they had built was often dry. Others brought up much-needed farming and irrigation tools. A proper irrigation system would allow them to comfortably sustain their farming operations even during dry season instead of relying solely on rainfall.

The agrarian officer, however, gave a different account, insisting that the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Department of Labor and Employment *had* been generous to the households with funds and other assistance, especially with the toilet and piggery project. Furthermore, the agrarian officer argued that, being given assistance despite not having political legitimacy, since the SJAMCO households were allowed to circumvent the standard quorum of fifteen household members required of cooperatives, was a strong sign of the government agencies' generosity. Rather, the agrarian officer characterized the SJAMCO's continuing needs as the result of general incompetence and financial mismanagement.

The dispute provoked feelings of mistrust and uncertainty among the household members regarding the government's apparent lack of commitment towards the SJAMCO's food projects. The SJAMCO households' sentiments were corroborated by the inadequate oversight from the DAR, as there was no division within DAR assigned to guiding and aiding them with irrigation systems, expanded funds, information sharing, cooperation, and training.¹⁴ More pertinently, the CARL makes no provisions for integrating community planning into the land reform process. Although the Quezon's Comprehensive Land Use Plan (1999-09, p. 105) underscored the admirable goal of devolving *haciendas* into economy-sized farms, aimed at empowering farm workers through independent farming and generating higher returns in terms of income, self-sufficiency (\$4.2.14), food security, and reduced poverty (\$4.2.1.5), these goals were *not* substantiated by a community planning process mandate that would have woven land ownership rights into successively progressive food project outcomes. The planning process would have helped the households delineate their food security goals, identify desired levels of accomplishments, and uncover resources and assets that the households already possessed in order to pinpoint a repertoire of need-gaps. These might have included material assets as well as human capital ones, such as skills (farming, technical, etc.), and knowledge (in organic agriculture, business, etc.) to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The community planning process might have also brought attention to certain partnership-building needs and elicited ideas on how to create novel social networks or strengthen existing, albeit weak ones, in order to meet the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law's objective of empowering and uplifting poor farmers from poverty.

DISCUSSION : The Significance of Planning for Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods

Examining the SJAMCO experience revealed four principles about community development, which in combination explain how social capital links the community planning process to empowerment and poverty alleviation. First, community empowerment was derived from, *de rigueur*, possessing resources and assets to realize aspirations for self-sustaining livelihood projects. Entitlements are not a birthright for poor households, suggesting that, although land title is an important first step towards social and economic sustainability, various forms of support from federal agencies are equally imperative for enabling deprived households to overcome poverty and become food secure. The continuing need for various forms of support further suggests that the community planning process would have been invaluable for identifying where and how the government should intervene.

Secondly, empowerment coincides with stalwart community-government partnerships, indicated by rich social capital that flows dialectically between both entities. This relationship must be cultivated and nurtured with unequivocal government commitment, as there are (1) financial reinforcements needed by the community, and (2) government-administered services inaccessible to the community that represented constraints on their social and economic progress. These constraints are financial and infrastructural amenities, such as potable water, a well-functioning sewerage system, and viable transportation networks, all of which speak about the quality of life for people and about their ability to achieve sustainable living conditions. Failing to overcome both financial obstacles and infrastructural constraints inhibit the growth of and enhancement of community empowerment. Thus, strengthening the social capital between government and community through partnership-building would bridge the community to these services and render continued reinforcements in the form of funding and materials.

Thirdly, the community planning process was an integral component of the pathway to food security. In Cary's (1970) very general definition, community development evolved out of organizing efforts to adequately respond to specific needs for bettering society. At times, doing so has meant challenging well-established, normative social systems. Irwin Sanders (1970, pp.19-26) added that community development is multidimensional. It is (1) a process, describing flows and exchanges between stakeholders and agents that enact change; (2) a method, referring to *how* and *what* steps to take in order to achieve some end; (3) a program, designed to raise a community's social, economic, or natural capital; and (4) a movement, or rather the coordinating of local leadership and resources, to attain a "best outcome". At the very core of these dimensions is the community planning process, an important mechanism for ascertaining potential internal and external resources, active and sympathetic partners, and need-gaps, all of which help to articulate community goals and benefits. The planning process is, above all, integral to analyzing the feasibility of sustainable outcomes, especially when progress is measured against short-term, medium-term, and long-term standards of achievement. In order for community development to achieve "best outcome", it must therefore be planned.

A fourth principle derived from examining the SJAMCO experience was recognizing the role of a facilitator, in light of the patron-client relationships defining the government-civic nexus in the Philippines, who possessed the familiarity with agrarian policies and the connections to centers of power to instruct community planners on navigating the community planning process through the fog of government bureaucracy. Community planners can here-to-fore shape or build social capital relations with key stakeholders in government by illustrating to them how well-conceived project plans can be both successful and beneficial for everyone involved. These project plans should communicate the expected improvements, such as structural changes, essential materials, areas and levels of government intervention, and other factors that contribute to project sustainability.

In the SJAMCO's situation, the planning process never advanced beyond the funding disbursement stage after the household members expressed their wants and needs. Although the members were careful to think about income-generating projects, the government agencies failed to acknowledge the dual importance of fulfilling the SAMCO households' more immediate food and income needs along with preparing for the sustainability of their livelihoods. This oversight resulted in the funds being spent as if they were for emergency purposes, rather than as the first of many investments into a sound economic foundation. In preparation for development, community planning might have looked like this: identify what the households needed to purchase in the early stages, and then ascertained how to organize and manage resources into self-sustaining, iterative food projects. Community planners could have facilitated the brain-storming of ideas surrounding each livelihood project that responded to questions about budgeting, the time line for project completion, and amount of funding required of each project; linked up cash crops to new markets; elaborated on the full scope of the projects to federal agents and compassionate investors; built a partnership with the government, while seeking opportunities to fully exploit these relationships to the SJAMCO community's advantage. Unfortunately, these layers of community development were notably overlooked in the beginning, and prevented the households from transitioning into a more sustainable existence.

CONCLUSION

The case of the San Jose Agrarian Municipal Cooperative teaches us that winning land rights, in and of itself, is not enough to overcome impoverishment and to attain a food secure, sustainable quality of life. In fact, land reform is deeply embedded in the complex scope of community planning processes, held together by strong partnerships with agencies that have the power to make decisions. These partnerships are significant for engaging the SJAMCO households in a planning process that would have guided them in developing sustainable livelihood projects and ensuring their successful completion. Because the vertical social capital linkages were weak, a collaborative partnership never evolved between the community and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), government agencies responsible for implementing the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. The lack of collaboration in light of weak social capital circumvented the community planning process, and neither the DAR nor the DOLE accomplished community development as well as they could have despite opportunities to steer the SJAMCO households toward a clear and sustainable food security plan. Consequently, because of the cavalier manner in which the livelihood projects were conceived and prepared, they remained food insecure, were unable to overcome poverty, and thus their quality of life suffered.

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(ENDNOTES)

1. This paper was based on a seven-week fieldwork and was part of the author's completed thesis for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The author is deeply indebted to the individuals, who agreed to be interviewed for this research, and to the Archdiocese Church of Valencia City, Mindanao, Philippines for introducing me to the San Jose Agrarian Municipal Cooperative.

2. Although there was a unifying theme in writings about social capital's dimensions, scholars differ slightly on their approaches. Narayan and Cassidy (2001) emphasized the group feelings generated when social capital was present; Woolcock (1998) approached the dimensions from a more comprehensive framework, looking also at the role of social institutions. I stress behavior, and the positive reinforcements that are produced when actors behave inclusively. I also take my cue from Auranen (2005), who drew the link between information sharing (what he saw as a dimension of social capital) to developing innovations in science. The information-sharing dimension was key here to enabling the SJAMCO households to cultivate livelihood projects that are sustainable. Information sharing between the SJAMCO households and government officials could have identified the desires of the community and the challenges facing government officials as far as what more information they needed from other sources to help steer the SJAMCO households towards sustainable and self-sufficient development.

3. Osberg (2003) cited Dick Stanley's invaluable work on social cohesion benefits to the community. Stanley explains how the bonding effect occurs. He wrote: 'social cohesion was the bonding effect within a society that arises spontaneously from unforced willingness of individual members of society to enter into relationships with one another in their efforts to survive and prosper'; '[it] was strengthened by the existence and creation of social capital (p.45).

4. While Bowles and Gintis (2003) proved that parochialism carries benefits to communities with strong inter-groups networks, which capitalize on the feeling of unity and trust among group members, their study was confined to in-group micro-units and do not consider networks in the form of collaborative alliances with pertinent macro institutions. They also do not pay much attention to the underside of parochial relationships, which is that social capital gives way to nepotism in the context of such relationships.

5. The complexity of undertaking community-based work aimed at reducing poverty through food security projects was deeply rooted in the patron-client relationships, but this discussion was too expansive for the scope of this paper.

6. PaHRD is an advocacy group, established in 1994, that builds the internal capacity of farmers, peasants, and indigenous communities by providing training on political topics, such as human rights, gender sensitivity and equality, and community empowerment.

7. The percentage of people in poverty for a designated area.

8. Poverty income level was not available for Quezon Municipality or San Jose Barangay, specifically, because the Philippine statistical data do not generally report on sub-island performance.

9. The growth rate was calculated using the formula $r = Y_{t+1} - Y_t / Y_t$.

10. Exact data regarding how much of Quezon Municipality was under *hacienda* ownership was unavailable. The city planning office does not have land use classifications distinguishing *hacienda* lands as a separate category.

11. The CARL also protects the rights of (subsistence) fishermen, but this element of the law will not be discussed here.

12. The re-distribution of land was to be completed within ten years. Re-distribution was therefore divided into four phases. The first targeted rice, corn, idle, foreclosed, abandoned, and voluntarily donated private lands. The second phase targeted private agriculture lands larger than 50 hectares, 'alienable and disposable' (A&D) public agriculture lands. The third phase encompassed private lands between 24 and 50 hectares, as well as the land sizes between 5 and 24 hectares (Balisacan, May 20, 2007, p. 8).

13. The CARL distinguished between the definitions of "farmer" and "farm worker". A farmer is defined as one whose

main livelihood is growing crops (Chapter I, Sec. 3(f)). Farm worker means one, who farms as a means of receiving wages or other benefits, employed part-time, full-time, or seasonally (Chapter I, Sec. 3(g),(h),(i)).

14. A new amendment to the CARL (Republic Act No. 7905) was added (\$35) to provide greater support to beneficiaries with government subsidies, training in cooperative management, improvements in infrastructure and public works, but language for a comprehensive community planning process remains missing. <<http://www.chanrobles.com/republicactno7905.html>> .

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