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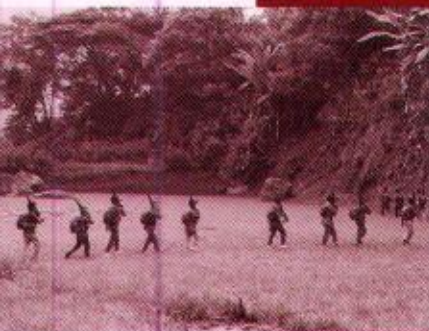
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2009



Dorothea Hilhorst



Records



& Reputations



Everyday Politics of a Philippine Development NGO



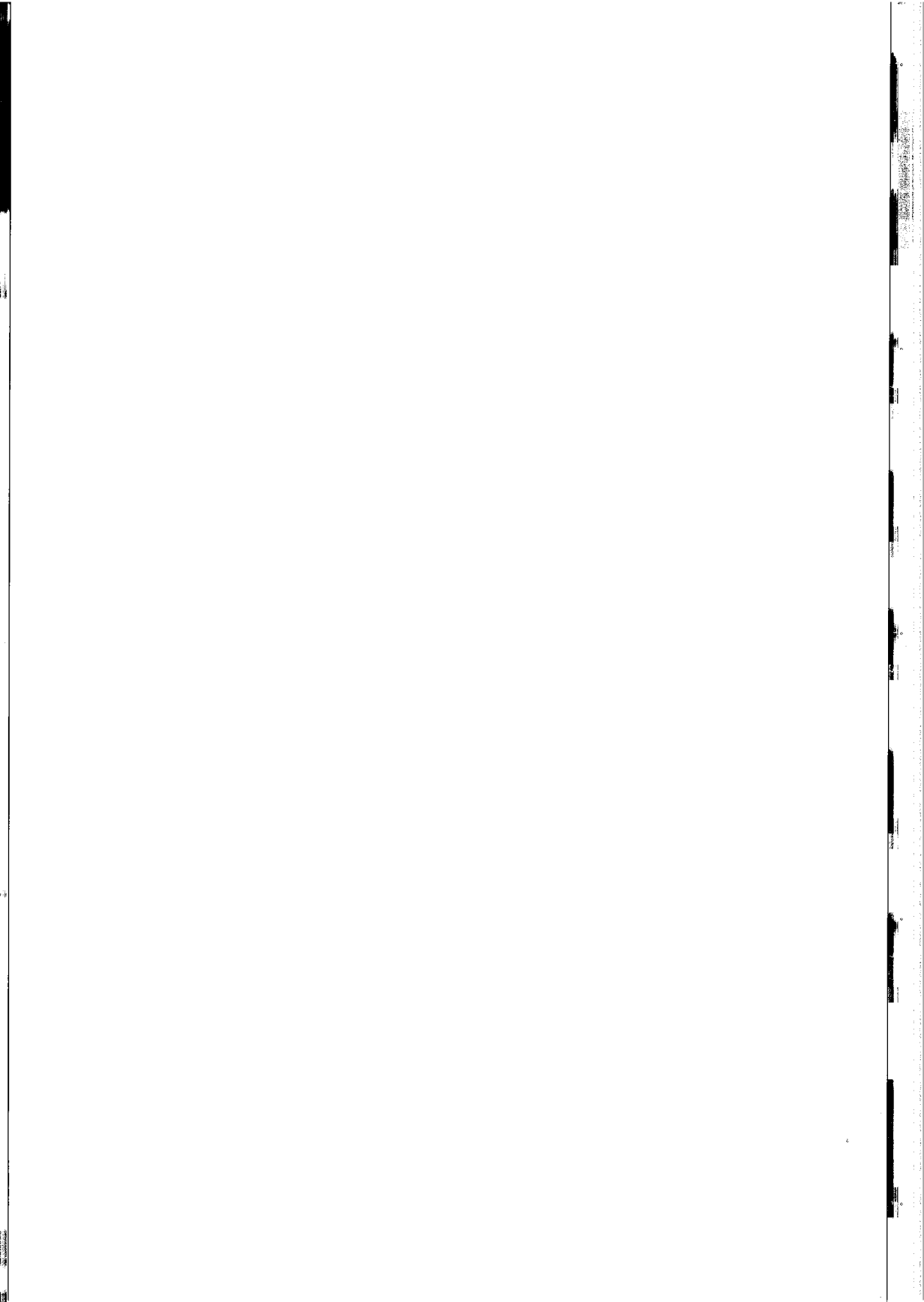
1. Taking on the identity of an 'NGO' is a political act.
2. The notion of hegemonic discourse deters one from asking how and when particular discourses become powerful in practice.
3. We cannot just be students of disaster. We must first be students of society and culture. (Anthony Oliver-Smith, 'Natural Disasters and Cultural Responses').
4. Playing on the victimhood of populations affected by disaster and conflict leads to 'donor fatigue'. Instead, humanitarian agencies must develop metanarratives that enhance a positive identification with people in developing countries.
5. The percentages of women in scientific posts at Wageningen University, October 2000, breaks down as follows (in f.t.e.):

Professor (hoogleraar)	7
Associate Professor (UHD)	4
Assistant Professor (UD)	14
Other scientific staff (temporary contracts)	27
Paid PhDs (aio's)	47

Organizational culture should never be made an excuse for the non-realization of numerical targets to remedy the gender imbalance in higher academic positions, and the continuation of discrimination against women in recruitment and reorganization practices in universities.

6. When children are not steered through the initial stages of musical education, they will not easily discover the pleasure of playing an instrument.

Stellingen behorend bij het proefschrift 'Records and Reputations. Everyday Politics of a Philippine Development NGO' van Dorothea Hillhorst.



Records and Reputations

Everyday Politics of a Philippine Development NGO

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NN03201, 2889.

Records and Reputations

Everyday Politics of a Philippine Development NGO

Dorothea Hilhorst

Proefschrift
ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
op gezag van de rector magnificus
van Wageningen Universiteit,
dr ir L. Speelman,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
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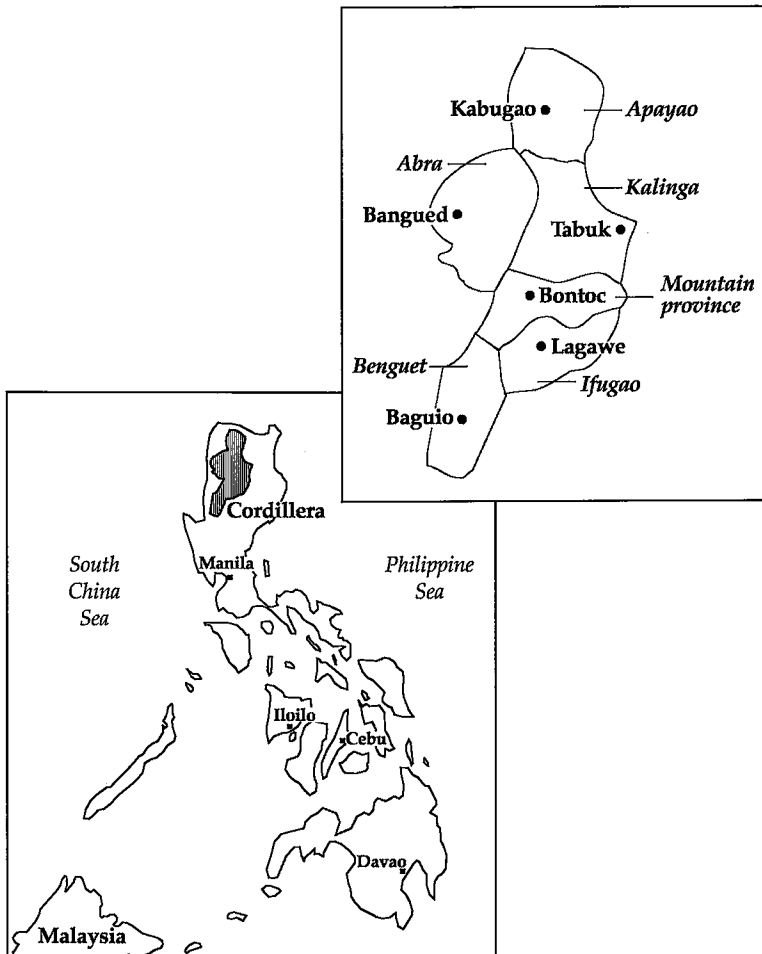
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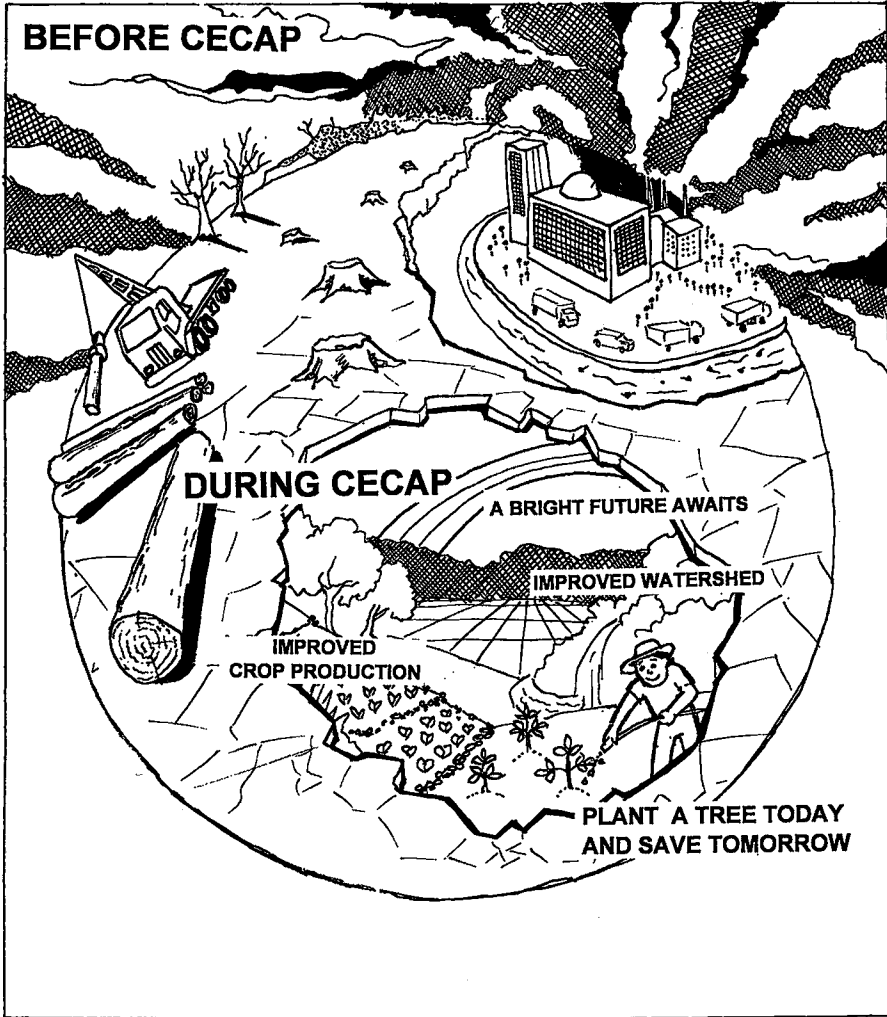
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To three formidable women:
My daughter Iana, my mother Joke
And my dear friend Joan Carling

The Cordillera of the Philippines Topographic map

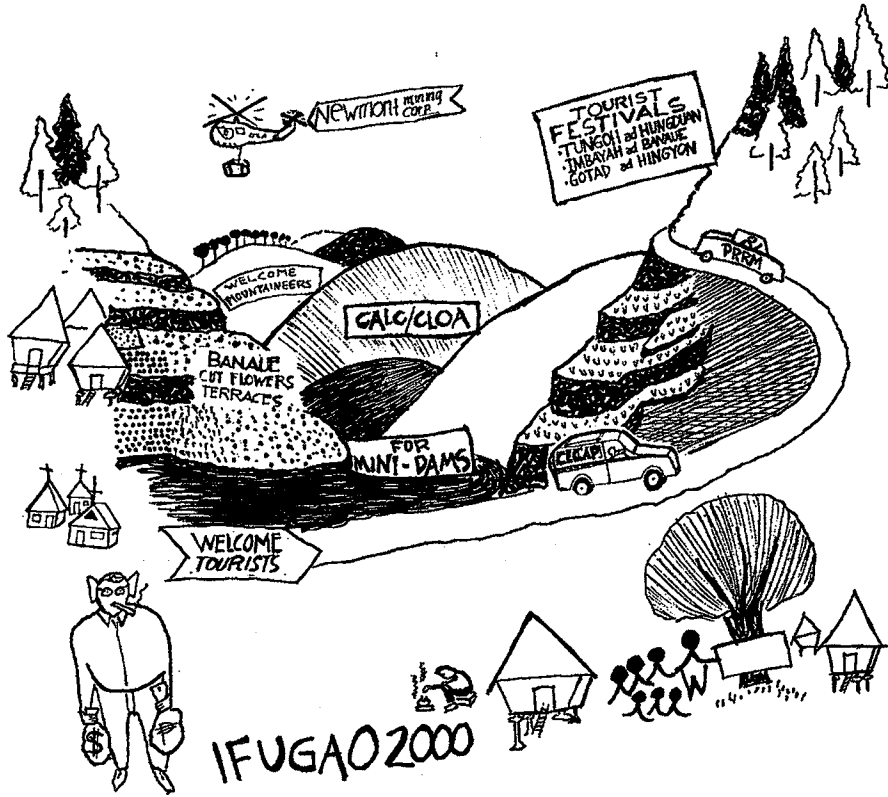


The Cordillera of the Philippines Development Programme's map



drawn after a poster of the Central Cordillera Agricultural Programme, displayed in Cordillera villages in 1994, see chapter 3

The Cordillera of the Philippines NGO map of the Province of Ifugao



drawn after a banner presented at Cordillera Day, 1996, see chapter 1

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1

Moving into the Cordillera

This book presents an ethnography of a Philippine Non Government Organization (NGO) and its surrounding networks. NGOs in the 1980s have become a major phenomenon in development. Their small size, links to the grassroots, sympathetic values, and capacities for efficient service delivery were all marked advantages these organizations had above state development institutions. The enormous rise of their numbers made some even speak of an 'associational revolution'. When this study was conceptualized in 1993, this glorious image of NGOs had just become dented. Impact studies pointed to substantial gaps between what NGOs claimed to stand for and promised to do, and what they actually delivered.¹ This shook the confidence these organizations had enjoyed within development circles and prompted discussions about NGOs' proclaimed effectiveness, their alleged close connections with the grassroots and their possible lack of accountability.

Discussions about NGOs, both celebratory and critical, seldom moved away from generalized notions and usually accepted the meaning of these organizations and their claims at face value. With this study, therefore, I wanted to explore how an NGO's claims, performances and accountabilities were shaped in the everyday practice of the organization. For the three-years duration of the study I was affiliated to an NGO concerned with indigenous women and development in the Philippines. This single organization, 35 staff at its peak, is at the heart of this study. During my stay, I did research for the organization, travelled with staff members to the villages, shared a house with one of the NGO leaders of the region, underwent with my baby local rituals for new-borns, shared numerous moments of office and family life, participated and observed.

In the encounter with the NGO actors it soon turned out there was no single story to tell of what the NGO *was*, what it *wanted*, and what it *did*. Not only were

NGO actors' practices differentiated, the organizational image presented to beneficiaries was also different from the one given in project correspondence with donors, or the one played out in social movement events. It became obvious that the NGO did not work according to one single rationale or discourse, but availed of a repertoire of multiple discourses. Some of these were contained in the reports, speeches and other statements through which the management and staff presented the NGO to the outside world. Others remained invisible in the everyday practices or were kept hidden from certain stakeholders.

This observation opened a black box. It cast doubts on many of the prevailing assumptions about NGOs and prompted me to change considerably my research questions. It made me ask how NGO management and staff members give meaning to what their organization is, does and wants and how they present themselves to relevant other parties (funding agencies, beneficiaries, state organs, social movements) in order to acquire legitimation as trustworthy intermediary do-good organizations. It also made me explore the tensions between the minutiae of NGO actors' everyday politics of sense making and legitimation and the ways this is influenced and constrained by wider political developments and social processes. To elucidate these questions, the study looks closely at the organizing processes within and around NGO formations. It follows how discursive repertoires evolve through time and how these get contested and lead to conflicts over their relative importance. It also delves into the relation between 'formal' representations and mechanisms of checks and balances, and the everyday practices of NGO staff members and stakeholders who construct social communities where norms and assessments of NGO standards and moral obligations are negotiated.

This chapter first gives a brief introduction to the history of Philippine NGOs and the Cordillera region where I did my research. This is followed by an ethnography of a regional event that serves as a window onto the major themes of the book. The three final sections of the chapter discuss the conceptual framework of the research and its methodology, and give an outline of the book.

Philippine NGOs: a history of turbulent politics²

The Philippines has one of the largest development NGO 'communities' in a single country, which has grown exponentially between 1984 and 1995.³ Philippine NGOs work on socio-economic development, community organizing, political campaigns and advocacy, arts and drama, research and publications. They are concerned with issues of poverty, human rights, justice, environment, gender, ethnicity and conflict resolution, sectoral interests of fisher folk, urban poor, farmers, prostituted women, mineworkers and migrants. Some are highly specialized, others combine several of these interests and fields of work.⁴ A handful of NGOs have nation-wide operations, hundreds of staff and multi-million budgets, such as the widely known Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM). The vast majority of NGOs in the Philippines, including those figuring in this book, have less than 50 staff members

(Clarke 1998: 98). They are highly varied, among other things with regard to their origins. Many have their pedigree in social movements or with church social action programmes (the Philippines is the only predominantly Christian area in the region, with an estimated 83% of the population belonging to the Catholic church, the remainder to Protestant churches and Islam). Some are (elite) family foundations. Others are NGOs aligned to politicians, NGOs grown out of state instigated co-operatives, initiatives borne out of academic outreach programmes, local branches of international NGOs, and a vast number of private organizations that ebb and flow with the tides of financial opportunities.

An important ground for distinction among Philippine NGOs is their political identity. Philippine NGOs do not represent a unified development 'community', but mirror the full range of Philippine political interests and contradictions. The NGOs I study in this book belong to a radical political movement, called National Democratic, and as we will see throughout the book this feature is more important than any other in their relations with other parties. To understand this, we have to go back into the history of NGOs in the Philippines. Development NGOs, as we know them today, date back to the 1970s. Their forebears, civic and voluntary organizations, emerged from the 1880s onwards. Gerard Clarke studied their history and found the political meaning of voluntary organizations in this country far more important than their socio-economic impact. According to him "Philippine NGOs and their antecedents, civic and political organizations, have long been used in the pursuit of political objectives" (Clarke 1998: 66).

Since the 1880s, civic organizations, either church-based, state-led, or aligned to partisan organizations, have all played a role in the making *and* breaking of revolutions and other political movements. This is well illustrated by the history of women's organizations. One of the first women's organizations, the Women's Red Cross Association, was formed in 1899 to provide humanitarian relief to Filipino soldiers fighting the take-over of the Philippines by the United States from the Spanish colonizers in 1898. The Americans, once having won the war, likewise used women's organizations in their 'pacification' campaign of the country, in part by forming the Philippines Women's League for Peace (Angeles 1989: 107-29). From 1905 onwards they encouraged the formation of a suffragette movement that, while enhancing women's emancipation, couched their aspirations within the framework of the American colonial apparatus (Jayawardena 1986: 155-66). Civic organizations continued to play a role in the patronage politics that evolved in the post-Independence state, and remained instrumental to the state's political projects. The first organizations for rural development, NGOs *avant-la-lettre*, were instituted by the newly independent state, as well as by churches and elite foundations in order to curb local peasant rebellions that might otherwise turn into Communist insurgencies (see Kerkvliet 1977).

The NGOs of this book belong to the so-called *progressive* NGOs, associated with social protest and oppositional politics. They find some exemplary predecessors in earlier revolutionary movements in the 19th century and the above-mentioned peasant-uprisings of the 1950s, but mainly originated in the later 1960s. A protest movement then swept over the country, as elsewhere in the world, around

nationalism and student activism. New organizations sprang up, while existing organizations turned increasingly progressive, such as those of the Catholic Church, where Liberation Theology radicalized the concept of social action (Alegre 1996: 8-9; Labayen 1995: 31-41; Fabros 1987). These years also saw the foundation of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed branch, the New People's Army (NPA), which in 1971 expanded into the National Democratic Front (NDF).⁵

In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law, marking the beginning of 14 years of dictatorship. All opposition groups and progressive social organizations were banned and numerous activists and community *organizers* were arrested, tortured and killed. Those who escaped continued their work underground as part of the NDF. Above-ground socio-economic and human rights organization resumed from the mid-1970s onwards, mostly under the umbrella of the churches and often staffed with cadres deployed from underground groups (Alegre 1996: 16; Rocamora 1994: 9-43). The murder of the most well-known political opponent of Marcos, Ninoy Aquino, in 1983, triggered a wave of political protest. A period of feverish mass mobilizations and the upsurge of numerous organizations followed, further eroding Marcos' dictatorship. This finally culminated in the so-called 'People's Power Revolution' of 1986, after Presidential elections where Marcos declared himself winner. In the days that followed, a massive uprising, backed by the US and Philippine military shifting their loyalty, ousted the dictator, and Corazon Aquino, widow of Ninoy, became president.

It was in this period, the 1980s, that actors of the protest movement increasingly made a distinction between different kinds of organizations among their ranks. From then on, the term 'People's Organization' (PO) was reserved for community-based organizations. The term 'Sectoral Movements' came to refer to 'grassroots' movements, such as those composed of peasants, indigenous people or urban poor POs,⁶ or to thematic social movements such as the human rights movement. In addition, the word 'NGO' started to gain ground, to refer to what Edwards and Hulme (1992: 14) call "intermediary organizations, who support grassroots work through funding, technical advice and advocacy". The distinction between POs and NGOs turned out to be of growing importance. In the course of the decade greater disparity evolved between the different categories, which increasingly came to correspond to empirical groups of organizations. NGOs became more 'professional': they paid their staff (slightly) higher salaries, required from them a higher education, and a good command of English. Their concerns also changed to include issues like the management of development. The organization of a "Forum on Women NGO Managers" (PHILDHARRA 1987) was one of many events that would have been unthinkable five years before, when all activities were geared towards the politics of the day.

Under Aquino's presidency, the state-centralist, anti-NGO policies of Marcos gave way to differentiated state practices. NGOs proliferated. They were given recognition in the Constitution, followed by the Local Government Code of 1991, that provided space for significant NGO and PO representation in local government (Brillantes 1992). While the number of NGOs grew, the progressive NGOs increasingly fragmented into multiple communities and non-communities. Different

labels appeared according to the strategies NGOs adopted towards the new government: varying from close co-operation, opposition under the NDF, to non-alignment. Although it was not always clear what these categories designated in practice, for some years they were part of the everyday vocabulary of NGO people.⁷ The groups were subject to different treatment by the state, especially by its military elements. The National Democratic NGOs in particular experienced ruthless human rights abuses, surpassing even the Marcos years in intensity (Amnesty International 1992). Only towards the early 1990s did the human rights situation start to improve although pockets of anti-NGO propaganda and human rights violations continue to this day. Notwithstanding the differences, NGOs all engaged in coalition work in order to scale up their activities. Coalitions amalgamated further until some embraced thousands of organizations spanning the whole political spectrum. The late 1980s thus became the 'golden age' of coalition building (Alegre 1996: 28).

When Fidel Ramos took over the Presidency in 1992, the number of development NGOs in the Philippines was at its height. Many of these had no particular political profile, but National Democratic NGOs still comprised a large part of those who had. In the following years a split in the underground National Democratic Front resulted in a schism among these latter NGOs. The split was announced when the Netherlands-based leadership of the NDF came out with a document that invited people to "rectify the errors and reaffirm the principles" of the movement. It was their response to increasingly critical voices against the communist leadership that could be traced back to conflicts that had lingered on since the early 1980s (Rocamora 1994: 107-39). Those within the NDF who adopted the document and continued to align with the leadership were labelled *Reaffirmists*, for short *RAs*. Those who did not, and as a consequence abandoned the movement, were called *Rejectionists*, or *RJs*.⁸ Neither friends nor foes of the movement had quite expected how much this split would affect the National Democratic development NGOs, which appeared through time to have loosened their ties to the underground movement. What evolved, however, was something short of a battlefield. NGOs and coalitions split apart accompanied by fierce fights, staff were ousted by whatever means, including the dragging in of age-old controversies. During a year or more, they competed in all ways over office equipment, bank accounts, donor agencies, and of course the People's Organizations they worked with. After the dust had settled, it was clear that a number of NGOs had not survived and many staff members had withdrawn from NGO work. The 'reject' or breakaway NGOs embarked on a number of different strategies and alignments. For the remaining National Democratic NGOs, the re-affirmation was but the first step in a *rectification* process that was to last for several years. The whole experience of the organizations was summed up, assessed and re-assessed, errors defined and corrected, until slowly a 'new' National Democratic movement took shape. The NGOs in the Cordillera belonged to this last group. My fieldwork spanned the years of rectification that followed the split. It was a period full of organizational and personal tension: stakes were high and so was the emotional involvement of NGO actors. These were years of intense discussion and reflection on the character of NGOs, their discursive repertoires and organizational strategies. Many of these discussions have found their way into the analysis that follows.

The Cordillera: contested development

The Cordillera is a mountainous area in the North of the Philippines, comprised of six provinces with approximately one million inhabitants. The regional capital, Baguio City, is 225 kilometres from Manila. Travelling through the Cordillera is a breathtaking affair, both for its beauty and for its difficulty of access. Its one high road has many rough stretches: bumpy and - with a rainy season of eight months a year - usually muddy and prone to landslides. Additional roads are few and several villages can only be reached by days of hiking. The area is inhabited by the so-called 'Igorots', with their world-renowned rice terraces. The Spanish never succeeded during four centuries of colonization to bring these people under their control and save some missionary outposts, they were not hispanicized. It was only under the American administration of this century, that the Cordillera became incorporated into the Philippine state. The name Igorots was given to them by the Spanish, who erroneously labelled the mountain peoples as tribes. In the course of the centuries several ethnographic maps were constructed of the area, usually distinguishing seven or eight tribes according to the different languages spoken in the region. Not only did they haphazardly omit certain groups (Lewis 1992; Resurreccion 1999), they also assumed levels of organization that did not exist beyond the village communities (Prill-Brett 1989). Nonetheless, in the course of time these labels became reality, to a certain extent, as identity markers: being 'Kalinga' or 'Ibaloi' increasingly acquired meaning in peoples' lives (Russell 1983). The term 'tribe' has become part of the local vernaculars, for example in expressions such as 'tribal wars'.

Igorot was a derogatory label, short for 'uncivilized naked savages' (Scott 1993: 55), an image confirmed by publications with titles such as *Taming Philippine Headhunters* (Keesing and Keesing, 1934; see also Kane 1933). These images disregarded the intricate institutions that had evolved to regulate conflict and headhunting practices between the villages, as appeared in later studies when the Cordillerans received more appreciative names, such as *Mountain Arbiters* (Dozier 1966). It is only in the last few decades that Igorot became a self-applied label (not to all Cordillera inhabitants), as part of an increasingly positive identification with the 'indigenous' character of the area and its cultures. In the constitution of 1987, the indigenous lobby resulted in a clause granting the Cordillera the status of an autonomous region. Since then, two Organic Acts have been proposed to realize this autonomy, but in both instances these were turned down in plebiscites, in 1990 and 1997 respectively, leaving the matter as yet undecided.

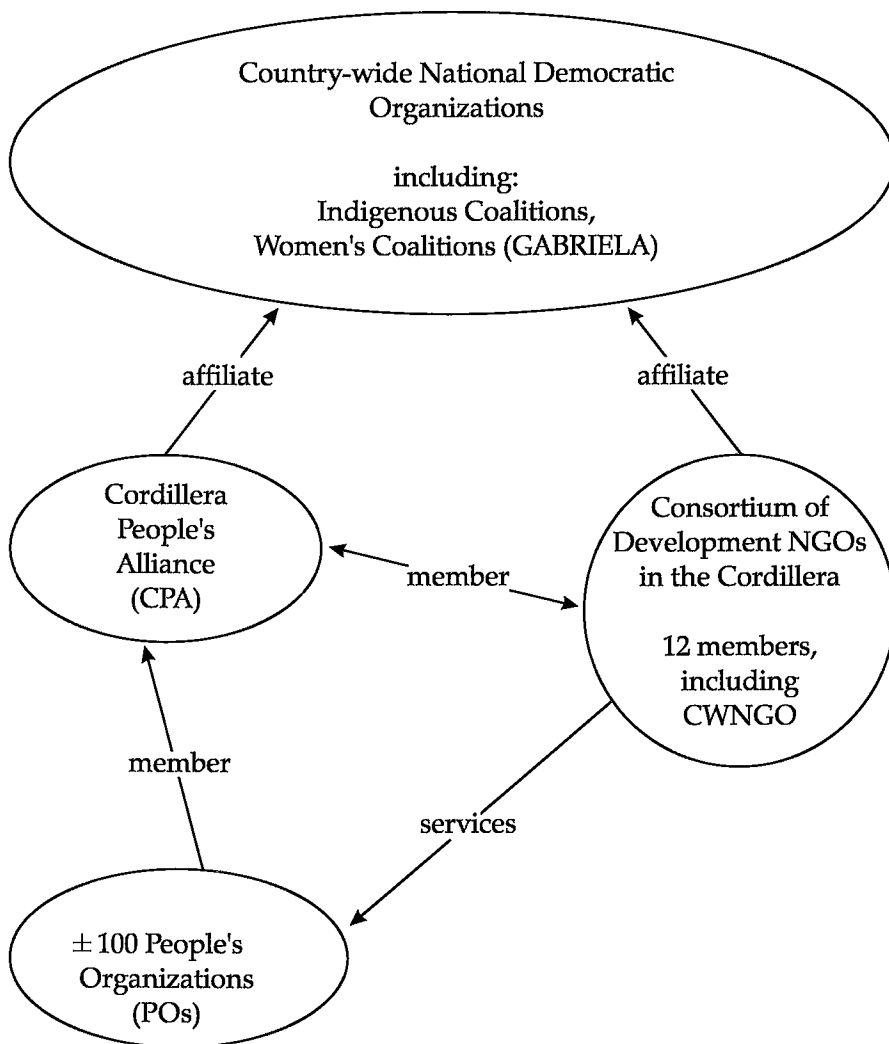
Seen from the outside, the lives of people in the Cordillera are still highly organized through traditional practices and techniques. Viewed from the inside, the area is, however, very diverse, both in cultural terms (de Raedt 1987), and in the extent in which it has been integrated into the economic, political and socio-cultural processes of the lowlands. Overall, the pace of change has accelerated considerably over the last 30 years (Sajor 1999), partly through a transition in livelihoods, where commer-

cial vegetable growing has increasingly replaced terraced rice production and shifting cultivation.

The recent history of the Cordillera has been full of conflicts. In the 1970s, protests against the construction of hydrological dams in the area spurred the growth of People's Organizations and movements, and the formulation of an indigenous discourse. At the same time, the region became a stronghold for the revolutionary struggle of the National Democratic Front and its armed wing the New People's Army, enjoying for years much support among villagers but also fuelling existing antagonisms. A high level of militarization by the government, including the bombing of areas until the 1990s, accompanied by extensive propaganda against development NGOs, further sharpened ongoing debates. In the midst of all this the area was hit by a major earthquake in 1991, enhancing the environmental concerns people had developed in response to earlier large scale logging. It also brought many organizations in the area concerned with relief and the reconstruction of infrastructure and housing. Meanwhile, the Philippine government, especially under President Ramos, increasingly pushed for the 'development' of the Cordillera, which in practice mainly meant the exploitation of its natural and cultural riches, through dams, mines and tourism. This notion of development has constantly been challenged by NGOs, which supported small-scale projects and introduced concepts like participatory and sustainable development to the communities. Hence, the concept of development in the Cordillera has become highly contested.

This study is particularly concerned with one of the NGOs that emerged from this development cacophony: the Cordillera Women's NGO (CWNGO). CWNGO was founded in 1984 and works with women in five provinces of the region. Its main office is based in Baguio, with an additional four small offices in the different provincial capitals. CWNGO belongs to a group of development NGOs that emerged in the 1980s out of social protest in the region. This group of 12 has formed a Consortium of Development NGOs in the Cordillera. Each NGO operates independently, but is accountable to the Consortium, where, to a degree, NGO policies are determined by the National Democratic ideas to which the Consortium adheres. The Consortium is affiliated to a sectoral movement, the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA). CPA, in turn, is an umbrella that encompasses 100 local People's Organizations (POs) and support groups in the region. The institutional set-up is such that the NGOs of the Consortium provide services to assist the People's Organizations affiliated to the CPA to organize, educate, and have projects (see figure).

Institutional set-up of the NGO Consortium



Cordillera Day

I like to introduce the CWNGO with an account of an annual one day event that brings all the above-mentioned parties together: the celebration of Cordillera Day. I could equally well introduce the organization by describing its office, some of its projects in the village, a meeting of its staff or an encounter with its funding agency. Yet, I have chosen to start with a window on the wider network of this NGO. In doing so, I am able to bring out the issue of organizational boundaries. Programme proposals, reports and project documents create an imagery of NGOs as clearly bounded entities whose activities are planned in advance and periodically demarcated. One might be tempted to confound this image with real-life NGOs. However, when looking at NGO practice, the boundaries that surround the organizations and the activities become vague or may evaporate altogether. The NGO may shrivel to the proportion of a mere post box, or adversely, become an only slightly distinguishable part of a larger whole. The latter applies to CWNGO, which is part of a larger configuration that evolved from the region's history. What it nevertheless means to be an NGO in this (ever-changing) environment is one of the questions addressed in this book. Cordillera Day, moreover, brings out clearly the other themes central to this study, namely the issue of multiple discourses within NGOs and the importance of NGO actors' lifeworlds and everyday practices for shaping the organization.

Cordillera Day is held yearly on 24 April and marks the anniversary of the death of Maclíng Dulag, a hero of the struggle of the 1970s and 1980s that gave rise to an indigenous movement for autonomy. He was killed for his opposition to the hydroelectric dams that were to destroy the ancestral lands of the Kalinga Igorots. Since his death, the Cordillera People's Alliance organizes an annual event in one of the villages or towns of the region. In 1996, the celebration took place in the regional capital, Baguio City, and was attended by an estimated 3,000 people.

Baguio City, 24 April 1996

The day is held in an urban poor community on top of a hill, overlooking the city. It can be reached by vehicle, but most of the participants climb the hill on foot. The road is extremely steep, but the climb is facilitated by the swelling sound of the *gangsas*, the brass gongs that are central to all Cordillera celebrations. At the dead end of the road, on top of the hill, is the basketball court. At its entrance, a large banner spans the road, leaving no doubt as to the political nature of the celebration:

Live Out The Ideals Of Our Revolutionary Martyrs.
Unite Against The Intensified Assault Of The US-Ramos Regime.
Advance The Filipino's Struggle For Self-Determination And National
Democracy.

A backcloth to the stage inside the court elaborates on the theme set out on the banner. It is an immense mural depicting the diverse "struggles of the Cordillera

peoples" against exploitation of their natural resources and the human rights abuses of the military.

The setting of the court is as a festival. As far as possible, the place is covered by large pieces of plastic, to protect the participants from the showers that are an inevitable part of the day in this season. On one side stand large tables from which meals will be served. On the other, vendors have put up their businesses to sell candies, cigarettes and refreshments. There are also sales-points for handicrafts. Staff members of the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) sell woodcarvings to generate money. At another table, a group of workers dismissed from a weaving company sell picturesque wall decorations which they produce with support from one of the NGOs. The most festive element of the event is formed by the participants themselves. The expanse of colourful native attire forms an attractive picture: woven wrap-around skirts for women and G-strings⁹ for men. These are worn both by the provincial delegates of the People's Organization and by the Baguio-based NGO staff. Participants who come from Manila and other parts of the Philippines wear the usual "progressive uniform" of jeans and a T-shirt with a funny print or political slogan. They honour the indigenous character of the occasion by donning at least an element of Cordillera cloth, such as one of the vests, shawls or bags that are for sale in NGO offices in Manila. The variety in shoe wear indicates the different socio-economic background of participants. Cheap sandals are in the majority, alongside *tsinelas* (the rubber slippers worn by all Filipinos inside their houses and the fields, but only taken into the streets by poor people), hiking boots and shiny leather shoes.

Around nine o'clock in the morning, all participants sit down on the concrete floor in a semi-circle in front of the stage, on which CPA officers and speakers are already seated. The programme customarily opens with prayers, the national anthem, and the reading of solidarity messages from within and outside the Philippines. It culminates in a 'banner-dance', a combination of a flag parade with an indigenous Cordillera dance to the rhythm of the continuing gong music. By the end of the dance, the music swells and hundreds of people join, with dozens of flags swung above their heads. The five provincial delegations then present the situation in their own areas. Each delegation consists of 60 to 100 people, who present their reports through songs and skits. Without exception, they denounce the government policies and development programmes implemented in the region as part of the government's goal to join the ranks of the Asian Tigers with their booming economies. Firstly they express their opposition to the development of open-pit mines that "will destroy the livelihood, environment and water sources of the Cordillera". Other protests concern the construction of a dam, and the promotion of tourism in the region. An officer of the CPA summarizes:

As we see, brothers and community-mates gathered here to celebrate Cordillera Day, all these projects and programmes are clearly *iti interest dagiti gangganaet nga imperialista, kasabwat da dagitoy babaknang ditoy Pilipinas, nga mangturay ken mangtuloytuloy nga mangibos iti resources iti Cordillera*, in the interest of the foreign imperialists, joined by the rich in

the Philippines, to control and continue to deplete the resources of the Cordillera.

After this, a speech is delivered by a Manila representative of a National Democratic organization to which the CPA is allied. In contrast to the pleasant, cultural presentations of the provinces, his speech clearly aims to agitate. Standing in front of the stage, shouting into the microphone, he explains the latest developments within the National Democratic movement. He ends his speech by calling people to "intensify the struggle against feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism". While most people listen attentively to the speech, others chat and despite the heavy tone of the speech the atmosphere remains light. I am standing to the side with a small group of CWNGO staff, all women. They giggle and challenge me to step forward and take a close-up picture of the speaker. The excitement is not just caused by his status as a national leader of the movement. We all agree about the handsome looks of this (unmarried) man, and the picture I finally take is later displayed in the office.

After the speech, everybody starts to mingle, looking for relatives and friends in the crowd. The women quite naturally group together, and I find myself in the company of current and former staff of CWNGO and other NGOs, and several village women enjoying the festive atmosphere and admiring each other's children. Long queues form in front of the tables from which lunch is served from huge cooking pots full of pork stew with cabbage. Banana stems and coconut shells serve as plates and soup bowls respectively. While people eat and talk, rain pours down almost without interruption. If anything, it seems to add to the mood, especially when the plastic sheets cannot hold the assembled rainwater and splash water onto some unlucky people, to the greater amusement of the rest. After lunch, everybody is supposed to go downtown for a rally that will be held in the city centre. This is delayed for some hours due to lack of transport, but the participants don't mind. They use the time to continue their exchange of the latest stories and gossip. Since there is no telephone network in the Cordillera provinces, the day is also used extensively by members of NGOs and People's Organizations to pass on messages, set schedules for meetings and activities, or to relate some project's progress or organizational problems.

It takes until after dark before, finally, the rally starts. In a column four people wide, the march is impressively long as it moves along the main street of Baguio. At the end of the march, we gather in the square. One of the elders, wearing nothing but a G-string despite the rain, starts to chant. He keeps us spell-bound. No microphone, no music to accompany him, just the melancholic sounds of the chanted story. After this, the crowd moves for a war dance around the effigy of a crocodile, -the widely used symbol for traditional politicians as hypocritical and all-devouring animals-, representing President Ramos. The men from Ifugao, the 'most indigenous' province of the Cordillera, lead the dance. With careful and concentrated moves, they throw and spin their spears up in the air at every step they take. It is an eerie sight, illuminated by dim-streetlights, and reflected in the rain puddles. The dance ends by torching the effigy until it is burnt, surrounded by a mass of yelling people. Around

us, the flow of the city in rush-hour continues, except for a circle of curious spectators who have stopped to watch the scene.

After everyone has returned to the site, and eaten dinner, the 'solidarity night' starts. All provinces and 'sectors' (miners, workers, students, women) present something. Most of the groups called to the stage perform a dance accompanied by *gangsas*, each of them using the rhythms and steps particular to their area. Some have prepared skits. Watching the performance of the skits, it becomes clear that for these people, 'progress' and 'development' have become terms of admonition. In one skit, Ramos, easily recognized by the big, unlit cigar, comes to a community and declares that he will bring 'progress', only to be kicked out by the community folk. The same happens to a man with a high hat painted with the American stars and stripes, who says he will bring 'development'. The songs reiterate: "*We don't want progress, we don't want development!*".

The 'observers', participants who are not from the region, are also asked to present something. The foreigners present, around fifteen of them from different nationalities, are compelled to sing a song from their country. Some of us are prepared for the request, obviously used to the Philippine 'solidarity night' practices, others feel completely embarrassed, and take a long time to find a song that can possibly be sung. The night turns more and more into a party, with people chatting, joking, gossiping, and dancing. To the relief of the organizing committee, only a few men get drunk. After midnight, people slowly start to leave to get some sleep. However, faithful to what has become one of the Cordillera Day traditions, some of the men continue the dances until morning, and then go around with their gongs to wake up the community.

On and off-stage: actors' networks and discourses

The speeches, appearances and acts of Cordillera Day provide a window on the use of multiple discourses in the network of the People's Alliance of the Cordillera. The political language of the National Democratic movement dominates the event, but there are traces of various other discourses too. Some of these are deliberate, others simply seep in. Central to the political language is the trio of anti-feudalism, anti-imperialism and anti-bureaucratic capitalism. These have been the catchwords ever since the National Democratic movement was founded in the late 1960s, but far from being perfunctory, they are brought out passionately and explained as if new. This is related to the fact that this year's Cordillera Day happened in the midst of the rectification campaign, referred to above. One aspect of this campaign was to reinvigorate the original language of the National Democratic movement.

Then there is the indigenous discourse, as a second voice enriching National Democratic tunes. It envelops the senses through its symbolic use in clothes, dance and music. It also appears in the strong attention to topics related to ancestral land and other natural resources, and in the constant appeal to insider/outsider categories and the anti-development, anti-progress rhetoric. Thirdly, there is the language of participation and development projects. When the provincial delegates present their reports during the program, this is done in a cultural manner, through skits and

songs. They reminisce the participatory development techniques promoted by NGOs throughout the 1980s. The language of development projects is not part of the official programme of Cordillera Day, but often slips into the off-stage conversations in the interactions between NGO staff and PO women.

The political, indigenous and development discourses are the three pivots around which NGO work in the Cordillera region is shaped. They all provide rationales for the work, appear in NGO writings and contain points of reference to guide the numerous decisions and actions taken in NGO work. To some extent they are complementary and can be applied strategically by NGO staff and management. For example, a narrative couched in development language is predominantly used when talking to funding agencies (ensuring the use of the fashionable concepts), authorities or to those villagers that are wary of politics. The indigenous discourse gets emphasis when the NGOs deal with regional or national politics, and guides their operations in international activities and United Nations events. The National Democratic discourse is brought out in gatherings like Cordillera Day, and guides much of the interaction between the NGOs, the POs and the Cordillera People's Alliance. However, when we turn our gaze inside the NGO, the use of multiple discourses leads to contest and conflict. As history has proven twice, during the struggle for regional autonomy and during the episode of splits in the National Democratic movement, these conflicts can endanger the very existence of the organizations (see chapters 2 and 3).

The picture becomes even more complicated when we take into account the discourses that dominate Cordillera Day in the interactions off-stage. Paramount among these is the language of kinship. During the day everybody spots relatives and bits and pieces of family news form a major topic. Other such discourses concern the 'hardships of life' and 'village politics'. The relation between the on-stage and off-stage discourses is not always the same. Sometimes they are plain contradictory. Note, for example, the singing of the national anthem at an event of a movement that denies the legitimacy of the Philippine state symbolized by this anthem. They can also be translations from one another. The language of kinship, for example, has found its way to the stage in the habit of speakers to create a sense of family among the participants by addressing the audience as "brothers and fellow townsmen". In other instances they can be parallel or counter-narratives. 'Indigenosity', for example, turns out to have different faces. Where indigenous unity is celebrated on stage, village conflicts are brought to the off-stage gathering. During the day one of the participants was sitting to the side, carrying his *bolo* (cutting knife). His village was engaged in a 'tribal war' with a neighbouring village and he was on guard to protect himself against a possible attack to revenge a murder committed by one of his fellow villagers.

The informal, off-stage interactions during Cordillera Day provide as much a window on NGO work in the region as the on-stage activities. There were many NGO staff members among the participants of Cordillera Day, both Baguio-based and from the provinces. In appearance and behaviour they did not stand out. Many of them originate from the region and speak the dialects and find numerous relatives and friends among the participants. Some actually live in the urban poor area where

the event was held, since NGO staff are often not significantly better off economically than their clients. The man with the knife was also an NGO staff member. Staff members bring their social networks and everyday discourses to their NGO work. Clients are also relatives, colleagues also godparents of one's children, and government officials also former colleagues. This has implications for the meanings attached to the organizations and their everyday practices. It impinges on NGO operations, albeit in a far less deliberate way than the 'official' discourses of national democracy, indigenoussness and development. Everyday discourses remain largely invisible from project reports and other statements on NGO work. Nonetheless, they are crucial in shaping meetings, interactions with beneficiaries, dealings with the funding agencies, and other NGO activities.

I argue in the study that to obtain an understanding of the dynamics of NGO discourses, it is imperative to follow their actors. The use of multiple discourses is interwoven with the social networks NGO actors are engaged in both within and outside the office. By studying the interactions of NGO actors with relevant others, the dynamic interplay of official and everyday discourses become apparent. The next sections introduces some of the key notions that will be used in this book. It starts with the question of how to perceive on NGO as a form of organization. This leads to a discussion of discourse, meanings and representations at social interfaces. Finally I elaborate on issues of legitimation and accountability.

NGO as a claim-bearing label

Much effort has gone into defining development NGOs. In the civil society literature, one often sees the term 'NGO' used as highly inclusive, taking in all kinds of social movements and membership associations under the heading. Literature dealing with development NGOs, on the other hand, usually restricts the definition to intermediary organizations addressing development on behalf of poor or marginalized people.¹⁰ Certain definitions clearly carry within them an agenda, such as the one used by Wils (1994) who proposes to reserve the term for those intermediate organizations "dealing with resource mobilization by the poor in order to achieve sustainable development", excluding among others all emergency relief organizations. It is important to note that, whether descriptive or normative, all these definitions are concerned with identifying certain properties that distinguish 'real' from 'non-real' NGOs (see for example Fowler 1997: 32). I find this problematic because, as a result, they do not analyse how this distinction is constructed and used (cf. Law 1994: 10)

Working out what organizations are proper NGOs is not merely an academic exercise, it is also of importance to the organizations it concerns. In the Philippines, the matter of fake NGOs is taken very seriously. Karina Constantino-David (1992: 138) distinguishes "three major types of NGOs in the Philippines which *hide under the cover of development* but are really set up for economic and/or political reasons" (my emphasis). For each of these, local NGO actors use separate acronyms: GRINGOs for

government-run NGOs, BONGOs for business-organized NGOs, and COME 'N GOs for fly-by-night NGO entrepreneurs which never, or only briefly, operate (*ibid.*, see also Constantino-David 1998). Identifying fake NGOs is not a neutral occupation, it is political. Processes by which organizations attribute 'genuine-ness' or 'fake-ness' to themselves and others are conflictive and power ridden. In the Cordillera, I found most NGO actors involved in these processes. Competition over funds, popular support, and space in public discourse was strong and it was common to find NGOs accusing *each other* of being fakes. When staff members of X were convinced that Y consisted of "opportunists looking for self-enrichment", staff members of Y implied with the same ardour that X represented a "cover organization for politically subversive activities". These struggles over which organizations are entitled to call themselves NGO are important. They imply that we cannot say what an NGO *is*, according to some positivistic traits, but have to view an NGO as a contested, often temporal outcome of organizing processes.

This position is rarely found in literature on NGOs. I fully agree with Stirrat and Henkel (1997: 68) who state that NGOs have become central to contemporary development discourse and practice. Most NGO studies, according to these authors, "take for granted the underlying assumptions of the new development orthodoxy and work within that paradigm" (*ibid.*). They argue the need to step away from the concern to make these orthodoxies more effective, and understand instead NGOs as 'cultural artefacts' (*ibid.*). In a similar vein, I found that most literature treated NGOs as 'things', or fixed entities. It is my contention that in order to understand why certain organizations appear and find legitimacy as NGOs, it is imperative to take on board a more dynamic understanding of what constitutes organization. That NGOs are not fixed entities becomes easily apparent when taking into account the history of such organizations. CWNGO, for example, started as a group of activists, transformed into an intermediary organization with an increasingly professional service delivery, until it finally de-professionalized to re-emphasize its social activist nature. These brief facts raise many questions as to how its organizational forms and discourses were shaped and changed. As it turns out, people act through multiple social networks and organizations that overlap and are in constant flux. They develop variegated forms of action and may have "good reasons to work in changing constellations of people to develop new strategies and projects" (Nuijten 1998: 14). As Nuijten stipulates, seen from the side of actors, organizing practices contain manifold forms of organizing. As a consequence, we cannot assume beforehand what the meaning of an NGO is. Instead we have to gauge how it is formed in practice and how NGO actors accord meaning to its unfolding forms, principles and procedures.

This view of organizing as process leads me to be cautious of defining development NGOs by particular properties. My problem with such definitions is that they foreclose the exploration of one of the more interesting questions regarding NGOs, namely, why and how particular organizations become NGOs rather than any other association or non-association. The definitions put boundaries around the phenomenon. In doing so, they cut across the self-referrals of organizations, and therefore fail to bring out the meaning of the label NGO as such. This study starts from the opposite direction. It considers all those organizations that present

themselves as NGOs. Whether these are 'genuinely' working for development, or consist of a 'family business', a 'criminal organization', or a 'political instrument' is not relevant to my argument. What is important is that they adopt the label of NGO. This label is a *claim bearing label*. In its most common use, it claims that the organization is 'doing good for the development of others'. The label has a moral component. Precisely because it is doing good, the organization can make a bid to access funding and public representation.

The meaning of the label NGO as an organization that does good for the development of others, is not universal, and gets contested by two other views of NGO. One of these views is political, seeing NGOs as extensions of the de-politicized neo-liberal development discourse. It criticizes the political role of NGOs and is among others found among People's Organizations or social movements that object to being included in 'the NGO community'. A Dutch peace advocate aptly expressed by saying: "I have always been an activist, until somebody told me I was an NGO person".¹¹ The other comes from within development bureaucracies and has recently gained ground among the public at large.¹² This is a generalized view of NGOs as un-accountable organizations that are primarily concerned with advancing the material development of their own staff. I will concentrate here on NGO as an organization that does good.

Conceiving of 'NGO' as a claim bearing label opens an avenue to studying the everyday politics of NGO legitimation. Everyday politics, as stipulated by Kerkvliet, "consist of the debates, conflicts, decisions, and co-operation among individuals, groups and organizations regarding the control, allocation, and use of resources and values and ideas underlying those activities" (1991: 11). Through everyday politics NGO actors negotiate the meaning of their organization and enroll outsiders into accepting it. As we shall see, acquiring legitimation as 'an organization that is doing good for the development of others' is no easy job. It entails first convincing others that a situation or population needs development. Secondly, it requires convincing others that the intervention of the NGO is indispensable and appropriate, and that it has no self-interest in the envisaged programme. Thirdly, it requires convincing others that the NGO is able and reliable, in other words trustworthy, and capable of carrying out the intervention. For a clarification of my position, I must stress that I am *not* suggesting that NGOs generally are untrustworthy. Many NGOs, including those I have been privileged to work with, largely live up to their claim. What I shall be arguing, however, is that there is no *necessary* correspondence between an NGO's worth, the way it manages its image, and the way it is perceived by the outside world.

Of processes, things and representations

One of the issues that I often puzzled over in studying NGOs is the relation between processes and things. Policy documents, press reports, and people speak of phenomena as things, whereas anthropologists think in terms of process. Anyway, that is the impression one gets from the many anthropological works that deconstruct development notions by showing their empirical complexities. What is

missing sometimes is attention to the interplay in practice between thing notions and process notions. An exception is the work of Gerd Bauman (1996). The migrants he studied adhered to two different notions of culture. They used the dominant notion in the media, of culture as a thing, a piece of baggage carried along by an ethnic community, but also more everyday uses of culture as process, which is alive and evolves in the interplay between communities. The use of different notions was partly strategic and contingent upon the context in which it was uttered, and partly reflected the human ability to maintain contradictory belief-systems.

It is important, I think, to take into account how people (not just anthropologists) grapple with things and processes. In the first place, studying how actors accommodate the tensions embedded in using different conceptions of phenomena allows us to probe deeper into issues of meaning. In chapter five, for instance, I deal with the question of why NGOs hold on to an intervention model based on a notion of development as a fixed trajectory, while being simultaneously aware of its process nature. By doing this, I am able to find out more about the symbolic meanings attached to this model. In the second place, the use of thing-notions is an important element of NGO everyday politics. I am particularly interested in one class of things, namely representations. More often than we care to acknowledge, we assume that representations stand for the real phenomena. However, this is never the case. Organizations are characterized by multiple realities and processes. Representations, on the other hand, are things, they are coherent images in people's minds or in presentations to others. When NGO actors present their organization, starting with the use of the label NGO, we are thus faced with representations. These representations are not just facilitating life by making it more ordered and comprehensible, they also play a role in politics, since they are always particular representations composed out of a range of alternative possibilities. As John Law (1994: 26) stipulates, "we should abandon a correspondence theory of representation. Instead of asking ourselves whether a representation corresponds to reality, we should be concerned with the *workability* and *legitimacy* of a representation". How actors turn their experiences with NGOs into representations, both through oral narratives or enacted in practice, is thus important for my questions on NGO legitimation. A major focus of this study is the way in which actors compose different representations, and the contests involved in their efforts to enrol others in accepting them.

Discourses and NGO politics

If much of NGO everyday politics centres around convincing one's own people and others about particular readings of what the organization is, does and wants, then this entails disputes over language. As Fairclough points out: "politics partly consists in the disputes and struggles which occur in language and over language" (1989: 23). This brings us to the importance of discourse. I shall discuss the concept of discourse at some length. Not only is it important for understanding NGO everyday politics, it

also has been widely used recently by scholars to denote certain trends in global development. Their use of the concept deserves, to my mind, some critical reflection, especially since it has major ramifications for development NGOs.

In its broadest sense, discourse refers to language as a form of social practice. Within this broad sense, the concept is being used in widely different ways. It may, for example, be used to refer to any piece of language longer than the individual sentence, or any talk or conversation. I use the concept as an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena (Gasper and Apthorpe, 1996: 2). In this sense, the concept reminds one of the notion of paradigm, providing an intellectual framework for understanding phenomena. Discourses are more or less coherent sets of references that frame the way we understand and act upon the world around us. Due to the influential work of Foucault, discourse has come to be seen as closely interweaving knowledge and power. The effect of discourse is that certain ways of understanding society, including its organization and the distribution of power, become excluded, whereas others attain authority. In its most structuralist version, discourse becomes a *regime* of knowledge and disciplinary power. Before elaborating some of the analytical difficulties of this latter position, let me review some of the discussions it has raised in development studies.

Hegemonic development discourse?

In recent years, several studies have focused on regimes of development discourse. As phrased by Ralph Grillo (1997: 12), a development discourse “identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development as well as speaking and thinking about it”. Ferguson (1990) analyzes, for the case of Lesotho, how development policy constitutes its subject as a ‘Less Developed Country’. Deprived of its dynamics, history and politics, this subject becomes a proper target for the technical development interventions that these agencies have to offer. In a similar vein, Arturo Escobar (1995) contends that since the Second World War a global language has emerged that creates development, underdevelopment, and the subjects of development. From this language, a whole body of practices has followed centred around planned development interventions. Both authors claim that these discourses are hegemonic in shaping development. Ferguson (1990: xv) likens the discourse to an anti-politics *machine*, “depoliticising everything it touches” and Escobar (1995: 39) speaks of “a space in which only certain things could be said and imagined” (*ibid.*: 39).

More particularly, in the 1990s, many considered that neo-liberal discourse was able to attain hegemony, since the end of the Cold War largely silenced contesting political themes of socialism and/or Third Worldism. This neo-liberal discourse links the operation of free markets to democracy, governance and civil society. As Mark Duffield (1998) contends, it treats societal problems and conflicts solely as diseases of unaccomplished development. The upsurge of neo-liberal discourse (sometimes called the New Policy Agenda, see chapter 6) coincides with the strong growth in the number of NGOs around the world, which is seen as one of the manifestations of this discourse. On the one hand, NGOs have a role to play in the provision of services

that receding states are no longer able to deliver. In this respect, Wood speaks of a franchise state, where “state responsibilities are franchised to NGOs, mediated to a considerable extent by the ideological prescriptions of donors” (1997: 80). On the other, NGOs are accorded a major role in the strengthening of civil society that is considered conditional in achieving democracy. This position is boosted by the work of Robert Putnam (1993) and summarized as: “without a free and robust civil society, market capitalism must inevitably turn into mafia capitalism... Without civil society, democracy remains an empty shell” (Ignatieff 1984, quoted in Smillie 1995: 220).

Although many celebrate the role of development NGOs in civil society for its potency to advance human rights and bring forward the voices of the poor and otherwise marginalized, it is precisely this development that in some places has evoked a critical view of NGOs as advancing the neo-liberal project and collaborating in the depoliticization of development. Yash Tandon calls NGOs the “missionaries of the new [neo-liberal] era” (1996: 182). Likewise, Jenny Pearce in the context of Latin America advocates maintaining the distinction between NGOs and popular organizations, in order to avoid the situation where “popular organizations gets depoliticized, while development NGOs get politicized” (1993: 223; see also Arellano-López and Petras 1994).

Multiple realities

Leaving aside for the moment the question of the political implications of (neo-liberal) development discourse, I want to elaborate why claims about the existence of a hegemonic development discourse fall short. Firstly, there is always a multiplicity of discourses, and secondly, the relation between dominant and counter discourses is more dynamic than presumed, leading among other things to their renegotiation in local contexts. To start with the first point, it has been shown that: “there have always been a multiplicity of voices within development, even if some are more powerful than others” (Grillo 1997: 22; see also Preston 1994; and Apthorpe and Gasper 1996). Even within a seemingly solid institution like the World Bank, multiple discourses prevail and are contested (Benda Beckman 1994). Development actors are therefore not moulded within a single discursive frame, but possess or avail themselves of alternatives. Even though one discourse may appear dominant, there are always parallel, residual, or emerging discourses.

The second point refers to dynamics at the interfaces of discourse encounters. Proponents of the idea of a hegemonic development discourse assume the discourse is largely immune to influence from counter discourses. Hobart (1993), for example, claims that development discourse and local knowledge are incommensurable. However, this position ignores the fact that certain counter voices have found representation and have proven to be influential in changing or at least eating into so-called dominant development discourses.¹³ More fundamentally, it overlooks the interplay of multiple discourses. The meaning of development notions is renegotiated in the local context (Pigg 1992). So, even when a certain vocabulary is adopted it may acquire different and, -as will be elaborated in chapter 4-, often multiple meanings in the localities. Similarly, alternative discourses are likely to be

blends of dominant and local, mainstream and protest languages. These insights lead Arce and Long to conclude that “rather than premise one’s view of knowledge on a binary opposition between Western and non-Western epistemologies and practice, one should attempt to deal with the intricate interplay and joint appropriation and transformation of different bodies of knowledge” (2000: 24; see also Arce and Long 1992).

The duality of discourse

If we accept that actors deploy multiple discourses, what, then, is left of the Foucaultian idea that discourse inescapably frames our understanding and practice? Are we instead left with a market of discourses, a ‘free place of ideas’ that people can strategically employ to their own interest and liking? Not quite. Several chapters of this book evince that, at certain points in time, particular NGO discourses indeed succeed in effecting a certain ‘closure’ of alternative readings of situations and relations. More than fashions, these discourses are effective in recreating the past, stipulating policy for the present, reshaping organizational forms and practices, including, excluding and reshuffling people’s relations. Similar observations can be made for other NGO communities around the world.¹⁴ They may include the ‘take-over’ of a gender discourse from a class-based language, a change of focus to conflict rather than development, the fascination with governance rather than Third Worldism, religious ideas swapped for development notions or vice versa, the introduction of rational management at the expense of goodwill and solidarity, or the hegemony of kinship obligations and community over NGO and organization. The seemingly contradictory working of discourses whereby, on the one hand, actors have available multiple discourses and, on the other, certain discourses at certain times become dominant in framing actors’ notions, calls for a further elaboration of the concept of discourse.

My position regarding discourse can be likened to Anthony Giddens’ notion of the duality of structure. Paraphrasing this author (1984: 5), one can say that discourses are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. To understand the working of the duality of discourse, we have to take into account the notion of agency. In the tradition of Foucault, discourses work like structures. In the words of Eagleton, Foucault thought that discourse “constitutes us to our very roots, producing just those forms of subjectivity on which they can most efficiently go to work” (Eagleton 1991: 47). This approach has been criticized for not acknowledging agency. Agency endows actors with the knowledgeability and capability to process social experience. Through their agency, actors “attempt to solve problems, learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them, and monitor continuously their own actions, observing how others react to their behaviour and taking note of the various contingent circumstances” (Long 1992: 23, based on Giddens 1984, 1-16). Agency is not unaffected by ‘structural’ constraints, but these constraints only work through the way actors experience and interpret them. Structurating elements do not provide ready-made scripts to act upon but are reshuffled, circumvented and accommodated by social actors. As I elaborate in

chapter 8, agency can therefore also be conceptualized as actors' capacity to *improvise*. Local actors are not merely overcome by development: they interpret, bend, and negotiate it through their agency.¹⁵ Discourses form structuring elements, but precisely in their multiplicity lies the room for manoeuvre for actors to renegotiate them. As was clear from the description of Cordillera Day, discursive repertoires are composed of a mixture of deliberate, official discourses and a range of everyday discourses. Norman Long stipulates that:

“since social life is never so unitary as to be built upon one single type of discourse, it follows that, however restricted their choice, actors always face some alternative ways of formulating their objectives, deploying modes of action and giving reasons for their behaviour” (Long 1992: 25).

However, that actors shape discourse through their agency is only half of the story. The other side of the duality of discourse prompts us to look into processes by which discourses become powerful. Discourses are not innocent. The more dominant a discourse, the more it operates as a set of rules about what can and cannot be said and done and about what. As a consequence, through discursive practice, i.e. by dominantly using and enacting a particular discourse, actors turn the discourse into reality.

Discourses *can* thus become powerful by closing options and creating new realities. However, we should not start an analysis by assuming discourse is powerful, but ask *when* and *how* particular discourses become more powerful than others (Watts 1993: 265). In the words of Bakhtin (1981/1935: 259-423), we should ask ourselves how and through what centripetal or centrifugal processes do certain discourses become dominant, or alternatively lose their central position. As I shall elaborate in this study, there is no single mechanism through which discourses become powerful. In some instances, wider political processes either enable discourses (Statham 1998) or pose such threats that actors resort to a single discourse. In other instances discourse can become powerful because it is reproduced through the unintended consequences of everyday routine practices, even without the actors being aware of it. Where particular discourses become dominant it is moreover not enough to identify their genesis and their workings without taking into account their interplay with other marginal, parallel, or counter discourses. In the remarkable study of discourses of identity in multi-ethnic London that I already referred to above, Gerd Baumann shows how local people have different meanings of the concepts of 'culture' and 'community' that fit into two opposing discourses, a dominant and a popular counter discourse. They use these meanings contextually in such a way that local usage and practice “sometimes affirmed and sometimes denied the dominant discourse” (1996: 30). The interplay between different meanings of development in official and everyday discourses will be a recurring theme in this book.

Studying discourse

Considering my interest in discourses as frames of reference for understanding phenomena, one will find little in this book of the socio-linguistic analysis that characterizes the more traditional analysis of discourse as sequences of sentences and conversation. Instead, I study discourse through ethnography. The way in which people strategically use a multiplicity of discourses I studied through observation and through interviews. Many actors were well aware of their use of 'different' languages and could reflect openly on how and why they used them in different contexts. Studying the duality of discourse, and analysing how discourses become realities through actors' practices, I found more complicated. These are subtle processes, occurring over longer stretches of time and difficult to isolate in the complexities of everyday social life.¹⁶ During my research I worked out several devices for studying the workings of discourse. I was, for instance, able to identify three discourses on development in one village study (see chapter 4) by composing these from the different meanings people attached in speech and practice to 'progress', 'community' and 'project'. Meaning here is a kind of intermediate concept. It denotes what certain phenomena signify to actors. In according meaning, actors draw on different discourses. Hence, studying meanings is a device for analyzing how actors use and reshape different discourses. I also substantiated my notions about the workings of discourse by discussing emerging ideas with NGO actors and outsiders in order to test their plausibility.

Furthermore, the concept of social interface turned out to be very helpful in studying discourse. Studying the interplay of different discourses and how they are negotiated in everyday practices was easier in situations of social discontinuity, which can be accessed with a focus on interfaces. According to Norman Long,

"[i]nterfaces typically occur at points where different, and often conflicting, lifeworlds or social fields intersect, or more concretely, in social situations or arenas in which interactions become oriented around problems of bridging, accommodating, segregating or contesting social, evaluative and cognitive standpoints." (Long 1999: 1)

Since social interfaces are real or imaginary meeting points of different discourses, "studies of social interfaces can bring out the dynamics of the interactions taking place and show how the goals, perceptions, interests, and relationships of the various parties may be reshaped as a result of their interaction" (Long 1989: 2). Many cases in this thesis provide such an interface analysis to delineate the strategic use of, negotiations over, and working of development discourse.

Records and reputations

I am interested in seeing how NGO actors in their everyday politics form, contest, and negotiate the meaning of their activities and organization, both among their own and in relation to their different stakeholders. Stakeholders are all those interested

groups, parties, actors, claimants and institutions that exert a hold over an NGO, and that affect or are affected by the NGO (Fowler 1997: 174). They include beneficiaries, donors, social movements and others directly involved, as well as government bodies that affect the environment of NGO operations. The locations of stakeholders of a single NGO may span the entire globe. Following the actors of the CWNGO in their different fields of activity literally led me to travel from the smallest villages in the heart of the Cordillera, to Manila, Beijing, Geneva, Germany and the Netherlands. One could say that the relation with each of these constitutes a field of activity for the NGO. Although there may be overlap and interaction, these fields are characterized by their own sets of routine practices, discursive understandings and demands. One of the major challenges for NGO actors is how to achieve legitimation by balancing these different fields of activity.

Legitimation is closely linked to *accountability*, which is one of the major catchwords in present discussions on development NGOs. NGOs in principle are accountable to all their stakeholders, but there is growing concern that in practice they are either not accountable at all or only to their funding agencies. In chapter 6, I elaborate on theoretical notions regarding accountability. I will show that what is normally associated with the term, -namely being formally responsive to a (real or implicit) contractual relation-, is derived from the tradition of rational and modern organizational theory. However, there are other ways of understanding accountability, related to the fulfilment of moral obligations, that usually find expression in more informal ways. I will show that both forms of accountability play a role and are woven into the everyday practices of NGOs.

The pair of concepts in the title of this book symbolizes these different forms of accountability. A *record* is the sum of one's recognized achievements or performances. It is associated with formal reports and other written evidence to prove one's worth. *Reputation* is different. It is clearly relational. In a classic work on the issue Bailey (1971) states that a "man's reputation is not a quality that he possesses, but rather the opinions which other people have about him" (Bailey 1971: 7). Yet, the person concerned can try to influence his reputation, which is, so to speak, open for negotiation. Unlike record, a reputation is overtly subjective. It is a judgement based on different things and "[I]t follows that other people, even if they agree about 'the facts', may yet weigh them in quite a different way: the person whom you rate as 'a decent chap', they may write off as 'a man on the make'" (*ibid.*). Finally, reputation is certainly not objective. According to Bailey, the jump from a small clue to a large judgement "is nowhere more apparent than in the field of making and breaking reputations" (*ibid.*: 11).

Record clearly fits into expectations of formal accountability with its emphasis on transparency. Reputation is more associated with moral accountability and the opaque workings of social interaction, gossip and rumours. For this reason, NGO stakeholders and observers will normally prefer to rely on the record of organizations. However, as I argue throughout this study, records and reputations are not unrelated. One of the things I set out to do is to establish how the one informs the other. As I will show, records are not the transparent achievements and performances of NGOs. Maintaining a good record is a social endeavour. As a result

'Mister Record' is as negotiated, opaque and moral as his informal and discredited sister, 'Miss Reputation'.

Research encounters

This study can be viewed as a threefold encounter between empirical events, local actors' interpretations, and theoretical notions. In two ways, I am part of the resulting narrative myself. My presence interfered with the study: it sometimes changed events, and actors adjusted their reflections about their world to their perceptions and expectations of me. Moreover, the narrative carries the imprints of my interpretation and imagination. Without pretending that this influence could be eliminated, the following brief presentation of my own history and interest in this project at least puts me into the picture, providing readers with the chance to recompose the narrative in their own minds.

My first encounter with Philippine NGOs dates back to 1986, when I did fieldwork for my undergraduate studies with the women's coalition GABRIELA. I arrived six months after the '*people's power*' revolution. Many of the people I met had recently been released from prison, and stories of arrests, torture, and escape, couched in hilarious anecdotes, were part of everyday conversations. The atmosphere was vibrant, with lots of issues to address and many avenues to explore in order to influence Aquino's government. During the course of my stay, the situation turned grim. The government did not live up to its promises of reform, and after peace talks with the NDF collapsed in January 1997, Aquino declared total war against the insurgents and their above-ground supporters. After witnessing the 'Mendiola massacre', in which government troops shot and killed 17 peasants during a peaceful demonstration in the city centre of Manila, my stay turned out to be more of a political and emotional than an academic experience. The last months of my stay were filled with demonstrations, reports of intensified human rights abuses, and a number of coup attempts.

Arriving back in the Netherlands, I joined one of the so-called solidarity groups, engaged in advocacy, campaigns and fundraising to support the diverse people's movements in the Philippines. This kind of solidarity work had been initiated in the 1970s, by a mixed group of missionaries and development workers who had returned from the Philippines. Among other activities, they facilitated refuge in the Netherlands for some asylum seeking NDF leaders. The office of the 'leadership in exile' was close to the solidarity group's office, so political discussions easily spilled over. But it was not just 'politics'. Through the work, the parties and solidarity events, I also experienced social processes, the working of political culture, and the everyday office practices of these groups. These I often found more telling of what happened than the political debates it was supposed to be "all about". This project started with the idea of going back to work for a few years in the Philippines, after having spent several years working in and outside the Netherlands. In 1992, through the mediation of one of my friends in GABRIELA, I was offered a three-year job as

researcher of the 'Cordillera Women' NGO. It took a year before financing arrangements were completed, during which time I conceived of doing a PhD alongside the work for the NGO. After the NGO granted the necessary permission, I wrote a research proposal that centred around the ways NGOs operate in their different fields of activity and how this affected their women clients. Since I did not know where the work for the NGO was going to take me, I deliberately kept an open mind regarding methodology and the construction of my cases.

Fieldwork

When I arrived in the Philippines, the 'split' in the underground movement had just started to affect the NGOs and was the talk of the day, especially in Manila. New arrivals like myself were immediately drawn in, both by Filipinos and by other expatriate development workers, among whom a 'shadow' debate raged which was sometimes as intense as the real one. Many of my notes of the first months deal with confusion over wildly different accounts and interpretations of events and the difficulty of navigating through the appeals of competing truths and loyalties. In the Cordillera, in contrast, the work of NGOs continued relatively undisturbed. Although there was much discussion about the issue, these organizations were united in their choice to re-align with the NDF leadership, and no open conflict occurred. Finding myself on that part of the political map falling in the re-affirmist camp, I did not have to take sides myself. Throughout my fieldwork I found enough space to work with the NGOs, even though they knew I did not share all of their political framework and continued to maintain my contacts with people on the other side of the dividing line.

During the first year of my stay, my main job was to co-ordinate a study into the impact of CWNGO in five villages in the different provinces. Each study was conducted with a team composed of staff from those NGOs of the Consortium involved in that particular village. In addition, I assisted in several office-based tasks, thoroughly getting to know my colleagues, office practices and procedures. The data I collected through participation, observation and casual conversations were supplemented with more formal in-depth interviews with those staff willing to co-operate with my research.

In the second year of my stay, the NGOs of the Consortium embarked on the rectification process, implied in their choice to re-affirm. The process was to take several years, involving the summing up and evaluating of all past experiences, scrutinising these against the ideological markers set out by the National Democratic leadership and at the same time testing and translating directives according to their specific regional views. This job had to be done by people internal to the movement, of which I was no part. Listening to the stories of those involved, however, made me feel I was witnessing one of those rare moments where ideology and history are explicitly being remade. This heightened my evolving interest in discourse. In the meantime, I continued doing research and other jobs, such as assisting in the preparation and organization of CWNGO activities for the international women's conference in Beijing, reconstructing the history of one of the funding relations of the

organization, and doing an extended village case study as part of NGO research into natural resource use. As far as was possible, I spent my time in this village. During the last months of my stay in the Philippines, I was mainly engaged with a second village case study, as part of an NGO assessment. Together, these separate research projects covered most of the fields of activity of the NGO and resulted in the cases on which this book is founded.

Most of the cases in this book take the form of 'extended case studies' (van Velsen 1967). Following or reconstructing projects or relations over a longer period of time can provide a "close-up view of social interaction and confrontation" (Long 1989: 251). This enables one to observe how meanings are constructed in practice and how social relations are reshaped or confirmed in the process. I allowed these cases to grow from the research process, always searching for how they could be meaningful for the narrative that was slowly taking shape. While collecting data, I continually tried to conceptualize, in the words of Ragin and Becker (1992: 1-17), what the process or situation I studied was a case of. According to these authors, what makes a 'case' is not its empirical properties, but the way it is constructed by the researcher. Consequently, what "something is a case of" may continuously change and can be redefined even long after the data are gathered (Walton 1992: 121-37). The case of the Kayatuan Ladies Association, presented in chapter 4, may clarify this point.

I was drawn to Kayatuan out of curiosity. I knew that the local women's group of this village had won several prizes for their projects, and I was curious to meet the local organizer. The project I looked at was a literacy programme supported by the CWNGO. At first, it seemed a straightforward case of villagers transforming development intervention. After some time, I realized the case made no sense without viewing this project as part of the *ensemble* of development initiatives in the village. Influenced by recent literature on development discourse, I started to read the situation as a case of a hegemonic discourse encroaching upon a diversity of village practices. In particular, the strong relation between 'cleanliness' and 'progress' brought out by the women of Kayatuan made me construct a case of villagers purifying their past, somewhat in line with the work of Mary Douglas (1966). It was only after I came back to the Netherlands and discussed the case with colleagues, that I realized I had got it wrong. Going back to my notes, I found there were several other meanings of development that all played a role in village life. It was not that I had never noticed them before, but more that I had not considered them worth bringing into the analysis, like so much of what one hears in the village, notes down, and in the end leaves out. Finally, I closed the case as one of 'interface experts and multiple local development languages'. Similar stories can be told about the other cases in the book. They were selected with a mind to the research, but largely sprang from the contingencies of my job and what happened in the Cordillera NGOs. Over time they were constructed as cases in a process of iterative encounters of phenomena and concepts. Neither of these elements were given primacy over the other. They informed and corrected each other, with the concepts steering the data-gathering and interpretation, and events, in turn, giving me new ideas to adjust my conceptual frames.

Another kind of method I found particularly useful was the analysis of public events such as Cordillera Day. These events can be defined as "occasions that people undertake in concert to make more, less, or other of themselves, than they usually do" (Handelman 1990: 3). Such events are highly revealing for someone interested in the meaning that NGO actors accord to their organization and work, since, in the words of Geertz (1973: 448) they contain stories people "tell themselves about themselves" (quoted in Handelman 1990: 9). Despite the information revealed by the dynamic between on- and off-stage interaction, events as such did not betray how they fitted into the everyday life of the actors involved. In order to bring this element into the analysis I had to stretch the beginnings and endings of events. Instead of limiting the definition of events to the public happening itself, I included their preparations and follow-up in everyday life.

The way I interpreted events, projects and situations is mainly derived from information and ideas obtained from actors interviewed or simply conversed with. Pieter de Vries (1992b) pictures interviews as negotiation processes between actors, where the interviewee as much as the interviewer tries to control the situation and where they jointly construct the outcome of the interview. Indeed, I found research situations often more coloured by the people involved than by myself. This was especially obvious when interacting with actors inside the NGO. My research within the NGO was a typical case of what Joke Schrijvers calls 'studying sideways' (1991). It was a study of 'peers', many of whom matched my educational background, often had much more experience than me, and frequently travelled abroad. Interviews often turned into discussions, in which I certainly did not have the monopoly on abstract or academic concepts, or on quick interpretations and extrapolations. I had to remind myself many times that their understanding of particular concepts was not necessarily the same as mine and that it was my job to obtain a feel of the difference. Just as often I was carried away by the discussions, exchanging ideas rather than acting as the 'emphatic listener' who at all times avoids leading questions and opinionated statements. These discussions were immensely insightful and I was often forced to rethink my own concepts and ideas. Some of the colleagues became my best friends.

Multiple accountabilities

Just as the NGOs I studied, I became no stranger to multiple accountabilities. I had to juggle with the claims of villagers, the expatriate calls to account for my choices, and the report requirements of my funding agency. Most importantly, however, I had to find a balance between my academic interests and the interests of the NGO. The NGO actors knew about the nature of my research. Several avoided being interviewed, others approached me eagerly and especially liked talking to me because I was an outsider and yet shared the passion they had for their work. For some it was an opportunity to unload grievances. Others tried to educate me, hoping I would carry the story of their 'movement' to Europe. And here I do, except not in the way some of them had envisaged. In many ways, the narrative I compose differs from the stories NGO actors would have told if given a chance. I can only hope that

the partial outsider's view presented here may in one way or the other contribute to the NGOs concerned, or be meaningful to local actors, even if it is not their own version of 'the truth'.

Sometimes I was asked, remarkably not by the local NGO actors themselves, but by other expatriate development workers, to allow the NGO a formal say in the end product of this book. Sympathetic and correct as this may seem, it would not be feasible in practice, because of the question of to whom exactly I should have given this say. The management of the NGO? The leaders of the NGO Consortium that CWNGO belonged to? My colleagues in the office? Or perhaps *the* women in the villages of the Cordillera? Finally I decided that the only person responsible for this book, was me. Although my analysis tries to stay as close as possible to my experiences in the Cordillera, I have drawn the line at *secrets*, wanting to respect the personal and organizational secrets of the actors. Bringing out sensitive issues or facts or information concerning illegality would unnecessarily expose actors to possibly dangerous consequences. Besides the fact that it would not have been easy to bring out these secrets in detail (that is after all why they are secrets), I did not need them for my analysis. They would have added additional layers to the multiple realities I unfolded, thus strengthening the narrative, but would not have made a major difference to the line of my argument. Agreeing with Malkki (1995: 16), this is an ethnography of processes, rather than a narrative bringing out the facts of Cordillera organizations. It aims to be an invitation, hoping to be plausible enough to invite readers to try out its ideas on the NGOs they work in or with.

Organization of the book

The first chapters of the thesis elaborate on NGO history, social embeddedness and discursive repertoires. Chapter 2 critically reviews the literature on discourse in social movements. A case of social resistance against hydro-electric schemes in the Chico River of the Cordillera is presented. Localized protest turned into a social movement for regional autonomy that was strongly influenced by the National Democratic Front, a communist movement for national liberation. By tracing how this movement acquired its particular shape, emphasis is placed on the socially constructed character of movements and discourses of urban educated activists and local villagers. The contestation of discourses is intrinsically linked to questions of power and control over the movement and its history. The chapter may also be read as a regional and historical introduction, since it deals with the social movement from which the development NGOs of the book originate and continue to be part.

Chapter 3 addresses the question of how, in a situation of multiple realities, a particular discourse becomes dominant. It shows the struggles of a political movement aiming to restore its grip on development NGOs that increasingly form a de-politicising alternative to their radical project in a country where State-Society relations have profoundly changed with the restoration of democracy. The second part brings out how women's organizations endeavoured to accommodate gender

issues in the National Democratic movement, but eventually subsumed their particular interests to the dominant political discourse. The chapter ends with a discussion of the multi-dimensional working of a powerful discourse, -as coercing, convincing and seducing-, which makes understandable why social actors submit themselves to an ideological regime that confines their room for manoeuvre.

While the first three chapters examine how development NGOs emerge from and fare in the waves of regional political turmoil, chapter 4 enters the everyday life world of local village women. It brings out some of the dynamics in the so-called People's Organizations that form the target group of NGO intervention. Local women in a Mountain Province village identify different meanings of development and cleverly play these out in dealing with the ensemble of development projects in their community. However, their appropriation of development interventions leads to unintended changes in the community, in particular the erosion of the position of elder women. From respected and knowledgeable farmers, these women increasingly become defined as actors engaged in 'dirty' work, lacking certain traits of progress, such as the ability to read and write. Quite contrary to what intervening agencies stand for, they unwittingly contribute to this change. This raises questions about the NGOs room for manoeuvre in implementing development.

Chapter 5 further elaborates the question of NGO room for manoeuvre. By reviewing a number of cases, it is concluded that organizing in villages is negotiated, and that villagers are much more decisive in the outcome than NGOs. While the NGOs adhere to particular notions of modern organizations and linear processes of planned development, local women have their own ideas and strategies and endow NGO-introduced developments with their own symbolic properties. In every village, NGOs have to negotiate their identity vis-a-vis villagers, which results in a bewildering diversity of outcomes.

If local intervention processes are indeed so malleable as stipulated above, how can social actors outside of the locality make sense of NGOs' activities and gauge their value? This question hits at the centre of debates on NGO accountability, and forms the starting point for chapter 6. A theoretical analysis of this concept leads to the conclusion that transparency is a myth. This directs attention to the nature of representations. Instead of banking on an idea of correspondence, we have to focus on how representations or accounts become workable and legitimate. A case study following a conflict in a weaving project for women reveals accountability to be an actor-constructed process. The way NGO accounts are composed and valued is more reflective of discourses and power processes in the arena of accountability than at the locus of implementation. The ability of NGOs to enrol others to believe their accounts and accept their trustworthiness is more important in this process than their ability to implement projects.

Chapters one to six all testify to a conception of multiple realities of NGOs through political and discursive processes on the one hand, and local diversity and power processes on the other. The remaining chapters explore how NGO actors shape and accommodate these realities in their organizational practices and at interfaces with funding agencies and other stakeholders. Chapter 7 addresses a strikingly ill-researched topic, namely how NGO actors in their everyday practices

give meaning to the organization. This question turns out to be much more complex than simple ideas of 'management-directing-the-organization', or 'management-versus-the-rest' perspectives, can account for. Organizational styles are diverse and ambiguous. Staff members, moreover, are differentiated along numerous lines, including social background, motherhood and marital status, the nature of their identification with indigenous women, and their economic situation. These alter their perceptions of and responses to events and processes. This chapter shows how, through the symbolic use of particular locales, social networks and cultural institutions, a certain coherence nonetheless emerges. The key notion here is human agency: through their agency people invoke particular meanings and accommodate multiple realities.

Chapter 8 looks at NGO leaders. These 'unusual human beings' have attracted much attention and they are usually attributed a lot of power. This power is subsequently understood as a property of leaders' traits, skills and styles. The chapter stands back from this line of thought and seeks to make a more social analysis of successful NGO leadership. It is organized around the life history of one NGO leader, who was followed in her dealings with international arenas and funding agencies. As I shall propose, successful leadership builds on abilities to build social ties and bridge discourses. NGO leaders appear as brokers of meaning: they enrol stakeholders to acknowledge their position, and accept their representation of situations, organizations and themselves.

Chapter 9, the final empirical chapter, deals with one of the most contested NGO stakeholders, i.e. the funding agencies. An extended case study is presented of the relation between CWNGO and a UN related program. This relation ended when the programme stopped funding the NGO, because it claimed the NGO was not efficient and was not accountable to its constituency. The case study, however, shows the vastly more complex history underlying this outcome. Among other factors, the dynamics entailed organizational competition, political differences and different interpretations of 'partnership'. It thus calls into question the generalized complaints about efficiency and accountability that dominate to this day the discussions regarding local development NGOs.

Chapter 10 rounds off the arguments advanced in the book and delineates their implications for some of the ongoing debates regarding development NGOs.

Notes

¹ See Riddell and Robinson 1992; Stuurgroep Impactstudie Medefinancieringsprogramma 1991.

² This section does not refer to Mindanao, where Moro-Christian politics account for a different NGO history not dealt with in this study.

³ The Security and Exchange Commission states an exponential growth of NGOs from 23,800 in 1984 to 70,200 in 1995. These figures are blurred, since they contain thousands of organizations not engaged in development work, and organizations that cease operating and are not removed from the statistics. A 1992 study estimated the number of actively operating development NGOs at 10% of the SEC figures (Clarke 1998: 70). In 1992 CODE-NGO, the largest NGO alliance did a country-wide survey and counted 7,000 NGOs, including an unknown number of People's Organization. After 1995, the number of NGOs may have dropped slightly. In 1998 CODE-NGO comprised around 3,000 NGOs and co-operatives. They estimated this to be more than half of the total of active NGOs in the Philippines (interview with Dan Congco, January 1999).

⁴ For a recent overview of Philippine NGOs see Silliman and Noble (eds) 1998.

⁵ This Communist Party, founded by José Maria Sison, was in fact a split-away from an earlier communist party.

⁶ The distinction between POs and sectoral movements is not always clear. Large grassroots umbrella organizations are, in everyday parlance, often included in the label of POs.

⁷ These labels were *Nat-Dems* for National Democrats, *Soc-Dems* for Social Democrats or those working closely with the government, and *Pop-Dems* for Popular Democrats or those favouring non-aligned participatory development strategies.

⁸ For a review of the different positions, see the special issue of Kasarinlan (Kasarinlan 1993)

⁹ A long strip of cloth wrapped around as a waistband with the end-parts hanging at the front and back covering the loins.

¹⁰ Considering the large diversity of NGOs, classifications are actually more popular than definitions, along a number of dimensions, such as their origins, function, ownership, approach, and scale of operation. See, among others, Clark 1991: 40-41, Farrington and Bebbington 1993: 3-5.

¹¹ Mient-Jan Faber, during the seminar 'Local capacities for Peace', organized by Pax Christi and IKV on 23 September 1999, Utrecht, the Netherlands.

¹² For a discussion of these, although focused on Northern Development NGOs, see Sogge (ed.) 1996 and Smillie 1995.

¹³ For the penetration of alternative discourse and institutions in world development institutions, see Woost (1993) and Feeney (1998) for participatory development, Willets (1992, 1996) for NGOs in the United Nations, Wilmer (1993) for indigenous voices in world politics, Princen and Finger (1994) for global impact of environmental organizations. For NGO influences on Philippine policy see Clarke (1998: 6) and Ethnic Studies and Development Centre Research Team 1997.

¹⁴ See Rutherford 1995 for a biography of a Bangladeshi NGO moving from a political activist People's Organization to a highly specialized NGO providing development financing. The biographical approach taken in this book brings out the ramifications of these

changing identities for the organization, its clients, the composition of staff and not least, for their understanding of poverty. The latter moves from its origins in social injustice and exploitation to a lack of knowledge and capacities. It is also interesting to note how discourses that have been abandoned continue to linger in strategic discussions in the NGO through the influence of different generations of staff.

¹⁵ See Long and van der Ploeg 1989; Long 1992; de Vries 1992a; Arce 1993, 1989; Mongbo 1995; Grillo and Stirrat, eds 1997; Villarreal 1994.

¹⁶ One of the reasons why certain authors arrive at a notion of hegemonic development discourse could very well be due to their focus on policy and project documents, which are, by nature, more coherent than the nitty-gritty multiple realities in everyday practices.



2

Damning the Dams: Discourse as Social Practice¹

In 1973, the Philippine government started a project to build a series of hydro-electric dams in the Chico River of the Cordillera. There was immediate opposition in those villages where exploration work for the dams started. Villagers tore down the camps of the exploration teams, and sought the help of local priests to write petitions to President Marcos asking him to relocate the dams in another area. This localized protest turned out to be the beginning of a social movement for regional autonomy. This chapter traces how the movement that emerged from resistance to the Chico dams acquired its shape. How did it transcend local opposition, and why did it become a movement towards regional autonomy rather than blend into the national movement against the Marcos dictatorship that simultaneously swept the country? The chapter also provides a background to the discussion of NGOs in the Cordillera. As we will see in the next chapter, these NGOs emerged in the 1980s from this movement for regional autonomy.

I focus the chapter on the social construction of discourse in the Cordillera movement. How did a problem that confronted certain villages in the Cordillera come to be defined as a regional, 'indigenous' issue, to which a large number of people committed themselves, even though the problem did not affect them directly? In exploring this question, I contend that the discourses of social movements are not products in the sense of engineered montages. Literally 'unauthorized', they are constructions that emerge from the social practice of different groups of actors. As the first part of the chapter shows, this leads me to criticize some social movement theory for maintaining an artificial separation between different categories of actors, such as 'insiders' and 'outsiders', or 'movement entrepreneurs' and 'participants'.

The chapter also brings out how the social construction of discourse is inextricably linked to issues of power and control. Struggles over the proper way to frame collective action have major ramifications for issues of leadership, control and representation, and may be decisive in determining who 'owns' the history of the social movement. These issues of control became particularly clear when the Cordillera movement broke into factions in 1986, after it entered negotiations with the new national government of Corazón Aquino over regional autonomy. This will be the focus of the latter part of the chapter, but let me first give an overview of strands of social movement theory that have emerged since the 1960s, and elaborate on the constructed character of movements.

Social movements: Theoretical perspectives

New theories of social movements (and theories of new social movements), began to flourish by the end of the 1960s, triggered by the prolific rise of such movements in Europe and the United States, most prominently among groups that escaped the classic class categories, such as students, blacks and women. Two strands are usually distinguished in theories of social movements. One, associated with the new social movement theories, sought to understand their logic in the context of post-industrial societies and emphasized their cultural components. The other, referred to as resource mobilization theories, focused on the question of how social movements came about, in particular how obstacles to collective action were overcome. The centre of gravity of the new social movement theories was Europe, and the United States that of resource mobilization theories.

New social movement theories were associated with student movements, and later with peace, women's and environmental movements in Europe and the US. These movements were different from their forerunners in the labour movement. They were based on the new middle classes, had a loose organizational structure that was averse to traditional party politics, emphasized lifestyle and values instead of material demands, and were anti-modernistic (Alan Scott 1990: 16-19; Klandermans 1988: 7). New social movements were originally defined in the context of Europe and the US, but the concept has also been applied in the Southern hemisphere, mainly in Latin America. There, social movements such as urban, women's, indigenous, and peasant movements, were considered to share many of the above-mentioned characteristics, with the notable exception that their main constituency was found among poor people, not the middle classes, and that their demands were partly material (Escobar 1992).

The label of 'newness' attached to such social movements provoked endless debates about whether one could truly speak of new movements or whether they shared much in practice with older movements. Academic debate was also concerned with the question of how the new social movements fitted into post-industrial societies. As one critic later stated, Touraine, Habermas and other new social movement theorists of the 1970s "searched for a substitute for the working class, and a new focus of opposition to society in its totality" (Scott 1990: 80).

The other strand of social movement thinking since the 1970s was formed by resource mobilization theories. These originated with Olson, who coined the problem of 'free-riders' to refer to those who tend not to commit resources to struggles for collective benefits, since they enjoy the fruits of collective action regardless of their individual participation. Olson has been extensively criticized for the lack of explanatory power of his model. It made non-participation understandable, but his theory failed to explain why people do so often participate in collective action, sometimes at great personal risk. In Olson's line of thinking people's needs and goals are treated as given, and the social processes through which people's motivations become shaped are ignored (Scott 1990: 109–31). Moreover, the individualistic basis of Olson's decision-making model was discredited by research showing the importance of social networks in movements for processes of identification and mobilization (Tarrow 1994: 21).

Discontent does not automatically result in resistance, nor does resistance automatically result in collective action, as was demonstrated by James Scott (1985). One of the themes of resource mobilization theories later became the search for the conditions under which collective action actually emerges. The argument was advanced that collective action does not come about in response to deprivation, but in response to changes in political opportunity structures (Tarrow 1994). Another important element in the development of social movements was found in the role of 'sympathetic third parties' (Klandermans 1988: 4–7).

Towards a constructivist perspective on social movements

The two strands of new social movements and resource mobilization theories converged towards the 1980s. Several contributions to the field explicitly aimed to combine the strengths of both (Klandermans 1988; Scott 1990; Escobar 1992). These works not simply synthesized approaches, but marked the advent of a more constructivist perspective on social movements, as best expressed by Alberto Melucci.

According to Melucci, many of the earlier debates on social movements treated collective action as a unitary empirical datum, rather than as a process in which actors produce meanings, communicate, negotiate, and make decisions. Once the notion of relatively unitary actors is abandoned, or taken as a product rather than a given, the question of how a 'collective' actor is formed and maintains itself becomes a problem of analysis (Melucci 1988: 331).

Melucci accords central importance to the construction of collective identity. As he says: "only if an actor can perceive his consistency and his continuity will he be able to construct his own script of the social reality and compare expectations and realizations" (*ibid.*: 340). In the case of the Cordillera, this means we have to ask how the collective identity of the regional indigenous people came about. However, as we shall see, this identity was contested and fragmented. This raises the question whether we should indeed, following Melucci, assume that collective action can only breed on a collective identity, or whether we should speak instead about identification.

Identity or identification?

My uneasiness with the idea of a collective identity underlying social movements stems from my caution in linking collective action to a singular purpose and a shared discourse. Although the concept of identity has considerably changed and incorporates notions of fragmentation and contingencies (Tilly 1995), it still remains difficult to assert that collective action is based on one particular identity.

The Cordillera regional movement, for instance, appears at first sight to be based on a regional, indigenous identity. As Finin (1991) described in much detail, an embryonic regional identity came about prior to the Chico Dams struggles, which was a product of the administrative grids imposed by the Americans during their colonial rule in the first half of the 20th century. Finin traces the emergence of an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991/1983) to the protective policies that the Americans under Dean Worcester extended to the 'tribes' in an area they demarcated as the Cordillera. During colonial rule the Cordillera gained a certain 'reality' through, for example, the introduction of segregated workforces in the mines, and separate education institutes for Cordillera residents. These processes fostered an occasionally expressed experience of difference with outside areas among Cordillera residents and, even more unlikely at the turn of the century, a sense of commonality within (Finin 1991). As Finin stipulates, the opposition that started against the Chico dams was able to build on the seeds of this emerging regional identity.

However, what happened in the regional movement in the Cordillera, as we will see, cannot be seen as the maturation of a regional or indigenous identity. The regional identity became the most visible for some time, but was always contested by others. Moreover, it was also clear that many people who formed part of the movement had no indigenous identity at all. The movement attracted many followers, varying from national politicians, a range of anti-dictatorship activists, an organization for national liberation, to international advocates. What these people shared was not an indigenous identity, but rather a sense of identification with this movement. A great number of people started to make the concerns of this movement of 'others', their own, and at considerable risk to themselves.

We cannot assume therefore that the sense of 'we' inspiring collective action stems from a collective identity, or even that there always is a shared, singular sense of 'we'. Following Long (1997), I think it more appropriate to speak of processes of identification rather than collective identity in reference to an issue or movement.² Identification, according to Long,

"allows one to consider a wide range of self definitions, some more fixed and continuous, others more fleeting and highly situational. How people make and attribute identification to themselves and others offers a key for understanding cultural and socio-political orientations and commitments."

Discourse in social movements

Discourse is a key notion of social movement theories, since it is through discourse that people define their situation and assess possibilities for action. Social movement theory often refers to social movement discourses as 'collective action frames'. The term is derived from the work of Snow and companions, who contend that social movements function as signifying agents that carry, transmit, mobilize and produce meaning for participants, antagonists and observers. They call this signifying work 'framing' (Snow 1988: 198). The emerging collective action frames have a mobilizing appeal: they serve to "dignify and justify" the movement (Tarrow 1994: 99). Tarrow explains framing as follows: "Out of a toolkit of possible symbols, movement entrepreneurs choose those that they hope will mediate among the cultural underpinnings of the groups they appeal to, the sources of official culture and the militants of their movement - and still reflect their own beliefs and aspirations" (1994: 122).

Notwithstanding the valuable insight that actors' experiences need to be linked to prospects for action in order for (collective) action to occur, I find Tarrow's position highly problematic. Firstly, he presents collective action frames as carefully plotted by entrepreneurs. By separating the entrepreneurs from the constituency of movements, he denies agency to non-entrepreneurs, and forecloses them from an active role in the process of framing. Although this picture may reflect certain moments of certain movements, it does not capture those moments of a movement when framing is 'everybody's' business and concern. Secondly, Tarrow's presentation implies that each social movement has one discourse, and moreover, that this discourse originates before the movement 'takes off'. In his model, the entrepreneurs and their objectives are given outside of and prior to the collective action. By doing so, he tends to reify social movements. His position overlooks the contestations that occur in the framing of collective action and, as a consequence, misses out the power struggles accompanying these contestations.

The problems inherent in this approach can be met, I believe, by adopting a more constructivist view of discourse. Consistent with a perception of social movements as constructed processes, instead of unitary phenomena, I propose to view social movement discourses as negotiated. Non-linear, multi-polar and not necessarily coherent, they are emergent properties that evolve out of the practice of collective action. This allows one to include 'non-entrepreneurs' in the analysis of social movements. Here I like to reiterate James Scott's concept of hidden transcripts. "Hidden transcripts are discourses that take place 'off-stage': they consist of those speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript [i.e. in open interaction between subordinates and superiors]" (James Scott 1990: 4). Discussed in private, whispered about in public, hinted at through jokes, hidden transcripts are narratives shaped among peers to contextualize their situation. It is Scott's contention that these invisible hidden transcripts provide "much of the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused" (*ibid.*: 184).

Although Scott's hidden transcripts sometimes appear as odd characters that work in the dark until the right provocation drives them out of their hiding places, I find his contribution very relevant to the discussion of framing social movements. The forging of hidden transcripts could, to my mind, be understood as the social construction of discourse in people's everyday life. Framing discourse as an everyday occupation of people should complement the concept of framing as the craft of the entrepreneur.³ The development of discourse, then, should be viewed as a negotiating process in which the distinction between entrepreneurs and constituency and the objectives of collective action are not preordained but get constructed through a process. The following narrative on the social movement in the Cordillera exemplifies this perspective. The first part focuses on the relation between educated, political 'entrepreneurs' and villagers, and the second on the contests between different groups of 'entrepreneurs' who started to compete for leadership of the movement.

The Chico River struggle

The Chico river is the longest and most elaborate river in the Gran Cordillera mountain range, flowing through Kalinga and Mountain Province. The Philippine government started to explore means of generating electricity within the country in the face of increasing urbanization and industrialization as early as the 1960s. The initial plans, however, were shelved because they were not feasible in economic and political terms. This situation changed drastically in the early 1970s. World prices for crude oil increased sharply and, with the declaration of Martial Law, President Marcos concentrated such power under his authority that firm implementation of the project could be expected. A German contract firm conducted a World Bank financed pre-feasibility study in 1973, and came up with a proposal to build four dams on the Chico river, named simply Chico I, II, III and IV. According to the study, the best way to proceed was to start with Chico II in Sadanga, Mountain Province. Following the study, the National Power Corporation (NPC), was charged with continuing survey work. The actual construction of Chico II was scheduled to start in 1978, to be completed in 1982 (Cariño 1980: 3).

The people along the Chico only became aware of the plans when survey teams entered their areas. Before long they recognized the threat the projects posed to their communities, and the survey team's first two camps in Basao were soon torn down by the villagers. In a third effort to erect a surveyors' camp, the personnel of the National Power Corporation were backed up by military escort. The escorting unit of the Philippine Constabulary began to intimidate the villagers, forcing local boys to join a William Tell game, by shooting coconuts off their heads (Anti-Slavery Society 1983: 103). The villagers, alarmed by the behaviour of the Constabulary and the material damage done by surveyors to crops and fruit trees, began to seek the intervention of the President. They brought six petitions to the President in the course of 1974, hoping that President Marcos would withdraw the project once he realized its impact on local residents. Each petition, the costs of which were borne by

the community with church support, was taken by a delegation of village elders to the Presidential Palace, but none of them got the chance of actually meeting Marcos. A letter from the President in response to the first delegation labelled their arguments as 'sentimental' and called upon them to "sacrifice themselves for the sake of the nation" (*ibid.*).

Until this time, opposition to the dams had been localized. Local, village-based resistance to intrusions had been a regular response in the region's history. The Cordillera had been integrated little in the country's colonial history with Spain, and stands therefore to a certain extent apart from the lowlands. Being apart from the lowlands did not, of course, automatically mean that it formed a region in any political, cultural or social sense. Notwithstanding a certain degree of regionalization brought about by the Americans, the Cordillera in the early 1970s remained predominantly an area of 'village societies' (see Prill-Brett 1989). Competition was a major element in everyday village relations, regularly developing into inter-village warfare, which was regulated through the institution of peace pacts, to which I shall return later.

It is therefore not surprising that the villages affected by the dam did not initially co-ordinate or unite much beyond village level. One of the early petitions to the President, for example, actually expressed support for the dam, as long as it would be built in the area of another village (Berg 1996: 50). Later petitions were signed by more villages, and took a completely oppositionist stand against the dams.

Contours of a movement

In April 1975, the Catholic Bishop Francisco Claver, of Bontok origin, aligned himself with the Chico basin residents in an open letter to the President. I shall quote at length from this letter, since it draws on several themes that came to be central in the opposition to the dam:

"Mr President,

I came here because I was summoned by my people. . . . They do not accept your decree - if decree it is. They will not accept it. This is the message they want me to convey to you, with respect, yes, but with firmness, too. Deep down in their guts they know damming the Chico is a *decree of death for them as a people*. This they cannot, will not accept. . . . My people are giving serious thought to armed violence and they are asking whom they should approach for arms. Mr President, when a Bontok has to turn to a people not his own for help, this only means he has tried his supreme best to solve his problem by himself, and he realizes his powerlessness in the face of overwhelming odds. In short, he is desperate. *Armed violence is the only answer, and he knows his spear and head-axe are no match for your guns* . . . It is my prayer that their message will get through to you and you will grant them the least of their requests: a hearing, a real hearing at some future date. This is all they ask - for the moment" (cited in Anti-Slavery Society 1983: 104, emphasis added).

The Bishop's phrase that the dams meant *the death* of a people, expresses the vital symbolic meaning of land. Land, as a central element in the ancestral worship of people in the Chico Valley, became a focal point of the struggle. As one of the later advocacy papers explained:

"All the many ancestor and spirit gods are associated, in the people's minds, with the land of the home region. The remains of all who die, even those who may die many miles away, are brought home. The home region – the land and all its improvements [a reference to the rice terraces constructed in the area over centuries, D.H.] – as it appears today, is largely the accumulation of the collective efforts of deceased ancestors, of generations of co-operation between the spirits and the living. The living are the guardians of this inheritance and, therefore, have strong responsibility for the care of the land and the dead. The ancestral spirits will hold the living accountable for any neglect in this awesome responsibility" (Cariño 1980: 5).

The 'land is life' theme was to become the most pronounced in the course of the struggle. This does not mean that it had been from the start, or that it was equally shared by everybody. For example, around 1977, twenty families from the village of Tanglag accepted the government's offer to relocate. They came back, however, after some months, because the government had not delivered what it promised (Berg 1996: 58).

The other implicit element in Bishop Claver's letter was the threat of violent resistance. By mentioning the spear and the head-axe he evoked the formally eradicated headhunting days that continued to linger – if not in practice, certainly in local memory and in lowland conceptions of Cordillerans. While the image of fierce head-hunting warriors exacting retribution for the desecration of their lands hovers over the letter, their capacity and preparedness to play according to the rules of the game of 'modern', lowland, politics is clear in the conventional and non-violent demand for a hearing with the President. The threat of violence remains, while at the same time the Bishop makes it clear that these are 'reasonable people' to be taken seriously in the negotiations concerning the dams.

The multi-lateral peace pact

The increasingly integrated opposition movement, consisting of many villages in the area as well as predominantly church-based 'outsiders', became institutionalized in 1975 through the creation of a multi-lateral peace pact. This instrument was developed during a church sponsored conference in Manila that brought 150 village people from the Chico valley to the capital. The peace pact, called *Vochong* or *Bodong* among the Kalingas and *Pechen* among the Bontoks, is a traditional institution regulating relations between two villages. Although there are many variations, essential elements of such peace pacts are that each village assures the safety of residents of the other village when they come within its boundaries, and that the peace pact holders take responsibility for violence or crimes committed by anyone of

their people against somebody from the other village. One of the implications of village responsibility is that violence can be avenged against any person from the other village (see Barton 1949: 167–208; Benedito 1994; Dozier 1966: 197–239).

The peace pact made at the conference differed in two respects from these traditional ones. First, the signatories of the pact consisted of a great number of parties, not just two villages, and included outsiders who extended their solidarity to the struggle. Second, the content of the pact clearly aimed to unite villages against the government. The pact stipulated, for example, sanctions against anyone who co-operated with the National Power Corporation. In order to avoid conflicts between villages, two sections of the *Pagta ti Bodong* were included to place struggle-related violence outside the jurisdiction of the existing peace pacts among villages:

“2. Should a Kalinga or Bontok from the dam areas be killed while working on the dam project, the peace pact villages opposed to the dam will not be held responsible, nor will they have to answer for the victim.”

“6. A peace pact already existing between two barrios will not be affected in any way when one of the members of a peace pact village dies or is killed as a consequence of his working with the NPC. Relatives will claim his body quietly but are prohibited from taking revenge.” (cited in Anti-Slavery Society 1983: 105)

These sections thus made exceptions to the practice of village responsibility for violence committed in their area. The conference peace pact, then, laid down and regulated the inter-village character that had developed in the oppositionist struggle. I will later elaborate on how this peace pact, both in its conceptualization and in its enforcement, partly depended on the intervention of the New People’s Army.

Government strategies: Divide and rule

Several weeks after the *Vochong* conference, Marcos abruptly ordered the National Power Corporation to cease all operations and to withdraw from the area. No explanation was offered, but it was believed that his government, in the light of the Muslim war in the South of the country, wanted to avoid a second front of open rebellion in the North (Anti-Slavery Society 1983: 106). The relief at the suspension of the operation was, however, short-lived. By October 1975 it became clear that the government wanted to pursue the activity, and started project work on another site, in Tomiangan, Kalinga, where Chico IV was planned. Chico IV would submerge six other barrios, with a total number of between 670 and 1,000 families, according to different estimations (Cariño 1980: 4). By choosing another site, the national government apparently believed that it could divert the opposition. This turned out to be a miscalculation. Those villages in Mountain province that were no longer directly affected by the project continued their involvement with the opposition in co-operation with the Kalinga villages.

In order to break the opposition, and in particular the inter-village co-operation, the government now brought the Presidential Assistant on National Minorities (PANAMIN) onto the scene. The head of PANAMIN was Manuel Elizalde, a son of

one of the richest families of the Philippines. Elizalde arrived in Kalinga in November 1975, accompanied by a convoy of four freight trucks, three buses, a helicopter and eight other vehicles. His entourage of sixty people included fully armed soldiers, doctors, lawyers, cinema operators, 'hospitality girls', and two magicians (Rocamora 1979). Apart from trying to impress people by handing out money, rice, and other items, PANAMIN's policies to 'pacify' the Kalingas were based on divide and rule tactics, including the fuelling of local conflict by supplying arms to a village at 'war' with two of the oppositionist villages. Through a combination of tricks, bribery, and promises for development projects, Elizalde was able to enrol a number of community leaders into supporting the dam project (Winnacker 1979). In his own way, Elizalde thus also built his strategies on cultural heritage and practices in the area. While the opposition maximized the regulating mechanism of the peace pact, he tried to exploit the underlying competition between villages.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the rather crude interference of PANAMIN, local resistance against the work of the National Power Corporation continued. The villagers in Kalinga responded in ways similar to those in Bontok: by physically obstructing the surveying work and by petitioning the President. While villagers tried to stop the NPC from constructing buildings, the government responded with increasing military intervention. During one of the villagers' raids on the camps, around one hundred villagers, mainly women, were detained and taken to an unknown military camp. The search for detainees took several months, during which villagers' networks in Manila expanded. They enrolled the assistance of several NGOs and senators, among others.

At the local level, the struggle received an impetus when some people from the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the underground Communist Party of the Philippines, arrived and offered to assist villagers in fighting against the dams. The villagers readily accepted the offer. As one of them explained during my fieldwork:

"We had a strong opposition. First, we took a clear position to stop the dams. So, we didn't allow any materials or constructions into the area. Later, we were outnumbered by the military, so we wrote petitions. But the president of the organization who went to Malacañang was tempted by Elizalde's offer and changed his position. A neighbouring president was also bribed, so we began to get frustrated. Then the NPA came. We didn't know what to do any more by ourselves, so we thought maybe the armed group could help us further" (fieldnotes, February, 1996).

Entry of the New People's Army

The New People's Army was established in 1969 as the armed branch of the Communist Party of the Philippines which had been formed one year earlier. After the imposition of Martial Law, when many legal opposition groups were forced underground, the CPP/NPA expanded to become the National Democratic Front

with a total of twelve organizations. Following the Chinese example, they envisaged a revolution that was waged from the countryside. From the outset, the Cordillera provinces were considered very suitable for expansion, because of the strategic advantages of a mountainous area. As early as 1971, a first NPA group was established in Ifugao, and in 1972 a Montañosa Party Branch was formed. (Castro 1987: 27)

Although these first NPA cadres did not get involved with the Chico River struggle, their experiences will be considered briefly, because they shed light on later developments in the organization. The NPA leadership in the Cordillera consisted of cadres originating from the region but educated in Manila. They were primarily involved as activists in the nationalist movement. During the 1970s, however, they became increasingly influenced by a revival of interest in indigenous culture and values. This was partly triggered by a publication of the historian William Scott, who presented the history of the Cordillera as one of a string of episodes of united resistance against outside forces (William Henry Scott 1993/1972; see also Finin 1991). His rather romantic representation of the cultural heritage of the area⁴ provided activists with a historic foundation for emerging Cordilleran discourses of a united 'we'.

Their (renewed) exposure to Cordillera life led these cadres in 1974 to initiate debates within the Communist Party on how to assess the regional situation in relation to the revolutionary analysis, and what approach would be appropriate for the CPP/NPA in the area (Castro 1987). The NPA found specific conditions in the area that made it difficult to apply the general guidelines laid down in *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Guerrero 1979/1970). According to this handbook, "the correct policy toward all the national minorities is to take a proletarian standpoint and make the necessary class analysis" (*ibid.*: 274). The NPA had tried to follow this approach, but after some time came to believe that it was not suitable for the Cordillera. They proposed to change the Party's style of work in the Cordillera and form a separate army named the Igorot Liberation Army (ILA). This proposal was turned down by the central leadership of the Party. The controversy led to a temporary suspension of village-based work in the province of Ifugao until 1976 (Castro 1987).

In the meantime, an NPA unit from Isabela Province had to retreat under military pressure to the neighbouring province of Kalinga. They stayed in the area and gained acceptance, especially after their leader, Ka Sungar, married a Kalinga woman. As opposition to the dams grew, the unit of seven NPA cadre decided to move to Tinglayan and offer their help (Finin 1991: 435). The NPA gained much popularity when they started to ambush the Battalions based in the Chico area. Yet, the initial numerical involvement of the NPA remained modest. The NPA cadre in Kalinga had grown to thirty-three by 1979, but then more and more local men, and women, started to join (*ibid.*: 453). This took the form of village contingents, with all villages of the Chico line sending a number of youth to join the NPA.⁵

NPA involvement coincided with an increasing military presence in the area. Faced with growing opposition to the dam the central government withdrew PANAMIN, which had enjoyed little success in 'pacifying' the Kalingas, and started to send in more military troops. In the years that followed, the NPA took responsibility for armed aspects of the struggle, although strongly supported by the

population. The NPA, who sat down with villagers as equals and whose lifestyle and discipline generally formed a strong positive contrast to the behaviour of government troops, remained very popular. Apart from the many Kalingas who actually joined the NPA, most villagers were involved in one way or another, as messengers and by providing food for the cadres.

With intensifying military operations in the area and the involvement of the NPA, the anti-dam opposition set into a kind of rhythm. The everyday routines of villagers were marked by harsh policies from the military side on the one hand, including curfews that placed restrictions on agricultural work; and on the other, by the need to provide daily food for the cadres. This routine was intertwined with regular military operations, ambushes, dialogues and other forms of struggle. The estimated death toll related to the struggle was one hundred by 1980, with the majority on the side of government troops, collaborators, and National Power Corporation personnel (Carifio 1980: 14).

We can conclude that the involvement of the CPP/NPA in the local struggle against the dams was the result of a blending of different interests. For local villagers, the NPA represented a resource that could be mobilized for their struggle. For the CPP/NPA, on the other hand, the controversy over the dams in the Chico River provided the political opportunity to gain a foothold in the area in order to further their revolutionary struggle.

The NPA and local villagers

Although the regional struggle attracted the support of many regional, national and international organizations, I will focus on the role of the CPP/NPA. Their role was, I believe, crucial among the 'outsiders' for several reasons. The CPP/NPA was directly involved in the struggle at the local level. Apart from military support, the NPA devoted much of their time to education, concentrated on linking the local struggle to the national situation. The NPA was also involved in organizing the movement. They assisted with the setting up of local organizations and in planning the tactics to be employed in the legal domains of struggle. The idea, for example, of making a multilateral peace pact originated from NPA cadres. Another important element was that the NPA could enforce the inter-village co-operation laid down in this peace pact. Military informers were liquidated by the NPA, and cadres intervened in village conflicts that threatened to disrupt the unity of the opposition.

The other important allies for the villagers were the churches.⁶ The churches provided much institutional support and their respectability enabled the enrolment of wide support networks among groups with different political orientations (Berg 1996). However, inasmuch as the churches gave direction to the opposition, this was usually congruent with the National Democratic politics of the CPP/NPA. The churches did not officially condone the National Democratic movement, but many of its members and staff did. One of the largest groups within the National Democratic Front was formed by the Christians for National Liberation. Church people were thus not just influenced by the National Democratic movement, but to a large extent formed this movement. Hence, what appeared as separate organizations were in

reality interpenetrating networks of actors sharing an identification with the National Democratic movement.

Window on the emerging discourse of the movement

The discourse of the struggle gradually changed under the influence of National Democratic politics propounded by the NPA and other organizations. It remained close to the issue of the dams, but became increasingly outspoken about themes that pointed to a 'broader analysis'.

In 1980, a group of Kalinga village leaders had dialogue with the President of the National Power Corporation, Itchon. The meeting, transcribed by observers from the Montañosa Social Action Centre (MSAC), provides a window on the emerging opposition discourse. The following excerpts are partly cited and partly summarized from the MASC transcription (appendix to Cariño 1980).

The meeting took place in an open space in Binga, Benguet, in the presence of Itchon and six other NPC officials. After the opening, Itchon invited the Kalingas to speak, and the first to approach the microphone was Macliing Dulag, the most renowned leader of the opposition. He said:

"I have only one thing to state here: your project proposal of building dams along our rivers will mean the destruction of all our properties on which our very life depends. We Kalingas were once known for our well-kept place, but your dam project has brought only trouble among us. We, therefore, ask you: forget your dams, we don't want them."

A second village elder, Balucnit, added:

"I have travelled through the lowlands and noted that people there could perhaps own pieces of land from two to five hectares. But they can get hungry, as they depend only on the production of rice from these few hectares. This is not so with us in Kalinga. We don't go hungry. We have whole mountain sides for other crops besides our rice . . . The electricity that you produce here . . . where does it go but to factories and the houses of the wealthy?"

The statements of Macliing Dulag and Balucnit reiterated the 'land is life' theme, and the implication of death resulting from the dams. By this time, however, the argument was couched in a comparative way. The Kalinga 'way of life' was compared, favourably, to that of the lowlands. If development meant following the path of the lowlands, they were not interested in it. In questioning the purpose of the dams, for (predominantly foreign-owned) factories and the houses of the wealthy, their denouncement had become partly incorporated into nationalist and class-based arguments.

After another seven statements by Kalingas, Itchon explained, in a mixture of Ilokano and Tagalog, why they had to persist with the dams, pointing to the energy crisis that threatened the nation. He ended his speech by saying: "I hope you can understand the answer to your question: we have no choice but to go ahead with it." The first Kalinga to reply to Itchon brought up another theme that had emerged,

namely that of discrimination against indigenous peoples: “. . . If you decide in favour of dam construction, are we not in this way being considered non-Filipinos? Or are we third class?”

In the discussion that followed, Itchon challenged the value the Kalingas attached to their lifestyle and land. He argued that because of a growing population, their way of life was jeopardized anyway: “This was your problem too, long before the NPC went there.” Furthermore, he referred to the many Kalingas who had already left the area to make a living elsewhere and added:

“God gave us brains, not just hands. And so it is not true that when you move out of your places to go elsewhere, you will die there. We use our brains to work out our way to live.”

To this a Kalinga responded: “God gave us our brains in Kalinga. God gave you yours in Manila. Keep to yours!” In no clearer way could he have indicated that the oppositionist discourse was partly derived from a sense of an ethnic identity. Lowlanders (in particular Manila people) are here presented as not just different species of God’s creation (the notion of God remaining the only shared understanding), but completely incongruous to Kalingas. Anticipating the next section of this chapter, it is perhaps equally interesting to note that the categories being compared are lowlanders versus Kalingas, not lowlanders versus ‘Cordillerans’.

Macliing added to their defence:

“While it is true, as you said, that people who have moved to other places may have been able to survive, such people voluntarily left their original barrios in search of land. But for any of us to be moved forcibly away from our homegrounds . . . that is quite a different matter.”

Macliing here explains the prominence of the ‘land is life’ theme in the struggle. He acknowledges that out-migration and/or selling of land is an accepted and often adhered to part of Kalinga practice. However, he points out the crucial difference between voluntarily leaving with the option of coming back or at least being buried in the ‘homegrounds’, and being forced to leave and completely losing the ‘homegrounds’ to inundation. In discussing peasant resistance in Peru, Gavin Smith described a similar process. He showed how in times of conflict, peasants were able to pose a common front without, however, forgetting their heterogeneity. In the course of the conflict,

“heightened discourse engaged people intensely in the ‘production of culture’ and in so far as membership and meaning were not just abstract notions vaguely linked to identity but rather were essential to the continuation of livelihood, participants were intensely committed to the outcome of this debate” (Smith 1989: 26).

In the case of Kalinga, the sacred value of land was part of local concepts prior to the struggle, albeit amongst more varied practices and values in relation to land. However, once faced with the threat of completely losing their land, the equation of land to life and something worth dying for became the dominant transcript of villagers.

Two-way influences: Debates within the vanguard

Although CPP/NPA influence on the development of opposition discourse and the organization of the movement was substantial, it should not be overestimated in relation to the role of the village elders and the local people. In organizing the movement, the NPA built on existing village networks and practices and village leaders left an unmistakable imprint on the emerging discourse of the movement. Besides, with the expansion of the NPA, it became an increasingly local force. The vast majority of NPA cadres came from the region, and 'civilian' villagers took a lion's share of the risks and responsibilities to maintain the struggle.

Moreover, the ideological influence worked both ways. The experiences of NPA cadres in Kalinga also led to debates within the Communist Party. As in the preceding years in Ifugao, the CPP/NPA leaders deployed in the region began to review the relation of the struggle in the Cordillera with the national revolution. In 1979, the NPA chapter in Kalinga made a proposal for the establishment of an Anti-Dam Democratic Alliance (ADDA, meaning 'there is') which would comprise a broad coalition of anti-dam activists, with the NPA as its army. The proponents of ADDA thought the issue of the dam was more important than feudalism and wanted to incorporate indigenous concepts in organizing work (Castro 1987: 29).

History was, however, repeated when the Regional Secretariat of the Communist Party turned the proposal down. The Secretariat was concerned that the proposed changes would eventually lead to a replacement of the Party by ADDA. Moreover, it considered the proposal ideologically flawed. According to the Secretariat, the issue of the dam was in fact a manifestation of feudalism, albeit with the government as landlord (*ibid.*). This ideological discussion was far from semantic or academic. If the dams controversy was a regional issue, there was no need for leadership beyond the regional level. If, on the other hand, the dams were an expression of feudalism, this legitimized the integration of the regional opposition into a nation-wide and centrally co-ordinated resistance movement. Hence, the ideological discussion was ultimately about the leadership role of the Communist Party. Although ADDA was never formed, debates within the NPA continued to simmer beneath the surface until eventually, in 1986, one group would break away from the CPP/NPA to form its own regional movement.

Clearly, then, ideological and organizational influences during the struggle were two-way processes. The CPP/NPA strongly influenced local opposition discourse, but at the same time became engrossed in debates about their own 'project' through their experience in the region. The key to understanding this two-way process are the changing conceptions of NPA actors. Although deployed as agents of the National Communist Party, many of them were personally attached to the region, either through birth or, in the case of Ka Sungar, through marriage. Their attachment increased through their exposure to the villages and, before long, they transformed from 'self-interested outsiders' to 'committed brokers', whose identification with the national revolution was in competition with their equally strong identification with the region.

Although seeds of conflict were soon to erupt, it seems that the double identification of the CPP/NPA leaders contributed for some time to the coherence that characterized the protest movement until 1986. Visitors and observers during these days were impressed, according to many enthusiastic testimonies in the press, by a vibrant movement which was carried both by educated, Manila-bred participants and the local population, and characterized by a close cooperation between above-ground (legal) and underground modes of organizing.

Movement for regional autonomy

In the period from 1980 to 1986, the protest movement grew significantly all over the Cordillera. Apart from the Chico Dams controversy, another hotbed of resistance had emerged in the Province of Abra, against a government sponsored wood company. From these two centres of resistance, the movement spread to other places, increasingly acquiring a regional character. The regional movement also expanded through legal organizations, both at local and regional levels. In 1984, the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) was formed. The initial membership of twenty-five organizations doubled within a year. The CPA embodied the village organizations, as well as NGOs and other support groups that had been formed including human rights, media, and anti-dictatorship groups.

The CPA was dedicated to greater Cordillera unity and self-determination. One of the CPA activities was to coordinate the growing international support networks which the regional struggles had attracted. Lobby work by international advocates led the World Bank to suspend its financial support for the Chico river dams, which all but meant the end of the project. Some time later, under the Aquino administration, the project was officially cancelled. Another effect of international work was that it enlarged the 'exposure' of Cordillera activists to international discourses on indigenous rights, for instance at gatherings of the United Nations. The international links served to strengthen the regional movement's emphasis on its 'difference' from the lowlands and its agenda became increasingly formulated in terms of indigenous people's rights.

The formation of the CPA announced the change that had taken place of a movement against particular government interventions towards a movement for regional autonomy. The movement had changed from "protest to proposal" (Fals Borda 1992: 305). Moreover, through the experience of struggle at local level, exacerbated by international developments, the 'proposal' concerned the region and focused on indigenous rights, rather than on the nation state. This transformation meant that the movement became centred in Baguio City and was more dominated by educated people.

Political opportunities opened up in 1986 to enter negotiations with the national government. When Corazon Aquino replaced Marcos, a new Constitution was formulated and the CPA successfully lobbied for regional autonomy. A tedious negotiation process developed in the years that followed, in which it became clear

that the national government was trying to maintain as much control as possible over the region's natural resources and military and financial matters. As it turned out, the proposal for an autonomous region resulting from the negotiations vested little power at the regional level, resembling more an administrative than an autonomous region. Autonomy was not realized because the proposal was turned down in a plebiscite, which led to an as yet unresolved impasse in the process towards autonomy.⁷

One of the reasons why the autonomous region was not realized was that the autonomy movement had lost its coherence. Three factions emerged within the movement during the negotiation process. The resulting groups devoted much of their energy to struggling with each other in the arena of autonomy negotiation. Fierce competition arose over matters of representation in the negotiations as well as in the public bodies to be created in the autonomous region. Leaving further aside the dynamics of this process, I want to discuss briefly the factions that emerged in the regional movement during the negotiations. With the emergence of different factions, debates concerning the movement's discourse intensified.

Factions in the movement for autonomy

One group was the faction aligned to the National Democratic movement: the underground CPP/NPA, and the legal Cordillera People's Alliance. In their analysis, the struggle for autonomy could "only be successfully waged in conjunction with the overall Filipino struggle for national freedom and democracy" (CPA 1989). The CPA's bid for representation of the Cordillera people was based on its formal membership of People's Organizations. In 1987, CPA had 124 member organizations, representing an estimated 25,000 individuals (Cariño 1987: 169). The CPP/NPA, although never formally involved in the negotiations for autonomy, nonetheless maintained a presence in the process by, among other tactics, releasing statements through the press. They claimed their status on the basis of their involvement in the regional struggles:

"The people themselves will tell you that they could not have organized massive and sustained resistance against the Chico River Dam project, the Cellophil Resources Corporation, logging and mining concessions, land grabbing, graft and corruption and militarization if not for the Communist Party's painstaking and unremitting efforts to foster unity among the various tribes and lead the struggle against the common enemy" ("Ka Benjie", in an interview with Malaya, May 1986, cited in Finin 1991: 571).

A second faction emerged when in 1986 an NPA group headed by a rebel priest, Conrado Balweg, broke away and formed its own 'Cordillera People's Liberation Army' (CPLA). The CPLA was a result of ongoing debates within the regional CPP/NPA. The major grievance of the CPLA, according to press releases, was the "Party's failure to understand and accommodate the differences between the Cordillera and lowland society". The CPLA envisaged an autonomous region,

governed through extended traditional peace pact structures. Their claim to represent the Cordillera people was based on their grounding in the regional culture. As a CPLA spokesperson explained during a press-conference:

“We call [the CPLA] the legitimate army of the Cordillera, based on its history. If we recall, the NPA only entered the Cordillera . . . (when was that?) . . . that was 1970, no? 1972. And the CPLA, although it was not yet called CPLA at that time, was already there. When I say the CPLA is already established, I say it in the fact that during our, even before the Spanish came to the Philippines, our tribal warriors, or I mean clan, are already there. Although it is not yet throughout the whole Cordillera . . . So, the history of the CPLA begins with the development of this tribal society . . .” (Mailed Molina 1986, cited in Finin 1991: 778).

The National Democratic camp (CPP/NPA and CPA) and the CPLA soon became each other’s arch enemies, with their competition even extending to ambushes against each others’ leaders.⁸ Both factions maintained an underground, armed component. An increasing number of advocates for regional autonomy distanced themselves from armed struggle altogether which they deemed unnecessary after democracy was formally restored under Aquino. These people came to form a third faction when they organized the Cordillera Broad Coalition (CBC). Many of its members were professionals, or local government officials in the Cordillera (Rood 1987: x), and its core was associated with one of the earlier indigenous lobbying organizations in the region (Casambre 1991: 61; Finin 1991: 260–8).

The CBC, more than other groups, emphasized the diversity of the region, which they presented as ‘unity in plurality.’ By their own claim, they wanted to represent the voice of the ‘silent majority’, and thus placed a strong emphasis on democratic procedures:

“There are varied and equally legitimate voices of the Cordilleras. These voices speak a ‘host of tongues’ and articulate a greater range of issues and concerns. In any ‘peace talks’ for the Cordilleras, the silent majority cannot and should not be ignored. This is the challenge to and of the Cordillera Broad Coalition.” (From CBC statement, presented in Rood 1987: 163).

The three factions that emerged employed different discourses, with varying assessments of the regional situation and correspondingly diverging proposals for collective action. Underlying their debates about how to understand the situation were struggles over the proper way of handling the situation and struggles over leadership and control of the movement. Once the conflicts had erupted, each of the factions reconstructed a past that gave them particular credit for the struggle and the people’s ‘victory’ against the dams. The National Democrats maintained that their contribution to the struggle lent them the status of representing the people, whereas the CPLA wanted to derive its status from its cultural embeddedness. The CBC, in its turn, challenged the singular representation of both other groups, by maintaining

that a plurality of voices should be heard and credited, a plurality that they moreover claimed to represent. The struggle for control over the movement was thus not limited to competing discourses about the action at hand, but also focused on a question of 'who owns the history and can therefore represent the movement?'

The missing link: From local to regional identification

Before concluding the chapter, let me return to the question of the relation between movement 'entrepreneurs' and villagers in the social construction of discourse during the years of autonomy negotiations. Although villagers remained involved, the influence of the educated leaders with a base in the city increased. A gap clearly emerged between discourses formed within organizations at the regional level, and villagers. This was particularly clear for the CPA and the CPLA, since these two groups had an outspoken vision of the region, and both maintained a popular base in the villages to whom they were accountable one way or another. Despite their differences, the CPA and the CPLA had several themes in common. In particular, they both condoned the idea of the Cordillera as an appropriate unit for an autonomous region. Both the CPLA and the CPA formulated a vision of bringing the diversity in the Cordillera under one regional denominator. Both encountered objections from their popular base organizations in the provinces of the Cordillera.

The CPLA based its regional vision on the institution of the *bodong*. It wanted to transform the *bodong* into an extra-local and even regional institution. The *bodong* was not, however, practised all over the Cordillera. Moreover, in those areas where peace pacts were part of the local institutions, they operated under different names, with *bodong* only referring to peace pacts in Kalinga. The proposed transformation of the *bodong* provoked a fear among people outside *bodong* areas, that CPLA proposals meant that the Kalingas would 'take over' the region (PIA 1989; Rood 1994: 11; see also Prill-Brett 1989). The CPA, on the other hand, introduced the concept of *Kaigorotan*. *Kaigorotan* was represented as a kind of tribe encompassing all 'tribes' in the Cordillera. It was the CPA's proposed expression of the Cordillera people as one population with a common identity. However, the CPA had to abandon the concept when they found during their congresses that many highlanders could not identify with the label of Igorot (Loste n.d., Casambre 1991: 58).⁹

One could thus say that both CPLA and CPA efforts to 'translate' localized discourses into a regional one were not very successful. Apparently, villagers' identification with the region was not such that they accepted a public regional identity. Another indication of this missing link was the eruption of internal conflicts between Kalingas and settlers from Mountain Province in the 1980s. These settlers had, since the 1960s, been buying land in Kalinga. Inspired by the discourse on ancestral land, the Kalingas started to reclaim this land from its legal owners, who they forced to return to Mountain Province. Apparently, the land discourse had escaped the confines of its application in the conflict with central government, and had been redirected to 'legitimize' conflicts with a group of 'fellow' Cordillerans.

These conflicts clearly point to a dilemma of the 'indigenous movement' in the Cordillera. The movement acquired its regional character in response to the

government's treatment of the region as a resource base for national development. This common ground for opposition against the central government did not, however, replace or exceed the differences within the region. Although a regional 'we' emerged, it remained fluid. Rather than a regional identity, it was an identification with the region that appeared in a common defence against the impositions of national government. As it turned out, this identification did not congeal into a lasting regional identity, to the detriment of the regional autonomy advocates. This underscores the point I made earlier that we should be careful to confound identification with a social movement with the development of a 'we-identity'.

Conclusion

When the Philippine government started exploration work for dams on the River it was unimaginable that local opposition to the dams would lead to a region-wide autonomy movement whose radiation affected the entire country, and whose mobilization networks reached the United Nations' headquarters as well as numerous countries in the North. Yet, this is exactly what happened.

The struggle against the dams can be divided into several phases. In the first phase, the struggle was localized both in its organization and its discourse. In a second phase, the movement vastly expanded. It attracted a wide range of actors and organizations. The organizational constellations that emerged were dynamic: boundaries were vague between different organizations and there were no clear distinctions between insiders and outsiders, leaders and followers. For instance, the churches that supported the struggle were largely made up of people identifying with the National Democratic framework. The CPP/NPA seemed to lead much of the struggle, but was in turn largely composed of local village cadres. These entanglements resulted in changes in thinking of the respective groups of actors. Villagers came to think more in national terms, while NPAs started to bring local issues into Party discussions. An oppositionist discourse evolved where inter-local and national interests found a combined expression in the movement for regional autonomy. This illustrates well the duality of discourse that I elaborated in chapter 1. When the CPP/NPA entered the area, it strategically adopted the villagers' 'Land is Life' discourse, but their ultimate objective was to gradually transform them into National Democrats. However, once exposed to village life, the NPA actors increasingly attributed reality to the local indigenous notions, which eventually led to the fragmentation of the movement.

In the third phase, the movement broke into different factions, as the combined result of discursive struggle within the movement and changes in the 'political opportunity structure' following Marcos' downfall. When the arena of struggle increasingly moved to political deliberations in the city centres, the distance, moreover, increased between educated leaders of the movement and the villagers. Even then, villagers were not without influence on the direction of the movement, as

becomes evident in their objections to the regional identity proposed by the leading organizations.

The case of the Chico Dams struggle reveals how discourses emerge in collective action. They arise from the practice of everyday resistance in complex processes of negotiation involving different groups of actors. Rather than fabricated by movement entrepreneurs, discourses of collective action are produced through continuous iteration between entrepreneurs and participants, engineering and spontaneity, myth and 'reality'. In the Cordillera case, these tension-ridden tendencies met at some junction halfway through the 1980s, producing a moment when the movement attained its most irresistible or, depending on the observer, its most terrifying vibrancy. The material presented in this chapter further underscores the point that issues of power and control are at the heart of conflicts over discourse. Collective action discourses emerge out of concrete experiences, and contestation of discourses is a form of power struggle that can significantly reshape the relations between groups of actors.

Notes

¹ An elaborated version of this chapter was published in *Images and Reality of Rural Life*, edited by Henk de Haan and Norman Long, 1997.

² Another question is whether identification is accessible to the observer, in other words, how to measure or observe consciousness? In dealing with this dilemma, Anthony Marx proposes to rely on elite pronouncements and evidence of collective actions as indicators of identity formation (Marx 1995: 165). So will I. It would be useful, however, to bear in mind the nature of the 'elite' of the Cordillera movement, especially when village leaders are concerned. Although maybe more affluent and influential than their co-villagers, these were people fully engaged in everyday village life, usually semi- or non-literate, whose statements have been transcribed by movement advocates or recorded during my fieldwork.

³ On the other hand, it seems social movements also feed people's hidden transcripts. During my fieldwork in the Cordillera, for example, passing references were sometimes made to ideas I recognized as products of the anti-dams struggle, even among people never actively engaged in it.

⁴ Florendo, for example, in discussing Cordillera involvement in the Philippine revolution of the end of the nineteenth century, concludes that: 'An ideology that transcended tribal boundaries was definitely not in accord with the conditions in the Cordillera at the outbreak of the Revolution. The *tribus independientes* were reacting to the crisis because of the need to ward off threat to their tribal integrity' (Florendo 1994: 88).

⁵ For an interesting account on the motivations, incentives, and costs of peasant household participation in the NPA on the island of Negros, see Rutten 2000.

⁶ On the significance of churches as supporters of indigenous organizing in the Philippines, see Rood 1998.

⁷ A second plebiscite in 1997 was also turned down. This time, the process of negotiation was quite different in two respects. Firstly, it had become dominated by traditional politicians. Secondly, the position of lowlanders residing in the Cordillera and not interested in autonomy played a much more significant role (see also note 8).

⁸ In December 1999, Conrado Balweg was killed by the NPA. According to an NPA statement this was done in revenge for "his crimes against the people of the Cordillera", including the killing of Daniel Ngayaan, one of the leaders of the Dam opposition, whose death in 1987 he admittedly had ordered.

⁹ Interestingly enough, debates about regional autonomy were mainly concerned with the way highlanders related to each other. The question of how lowlanders living in the Cordillera, estimated to comprise almost half of the Cordillera population, would be integrated in the autonomous region played only a minor role, unlike the Mindanao autonomy movement where the relation between Muslims and Christians was a central area of contestation (Rood 1987, 1994: 16; Finin 1991: 672).



3

Ideological Debates: NGOs, Gender and National Democratic Politics

This chapter is about struggles in NGOs to balance their development work with political agendas. It delves into issues of dominant discourses or ideologies by exploring how particular discourses become central in the practices of these NGOs. The first part contains the story of the relation between NGOs in the Cordillera and the National Democratic movement that they originated from in the 1980s, as was discussed in the previous chapter. It tells how, after the restoration of democracy in 1986, these NGOs diversified their activities and discourses and loosened their ties with the movement. When in 1992 the National Democratic movement entered a major crisis, its leadership called upon development NGOs to go back to their political roots as part of a so-called rectification campaign. Although a large number of NGOs in the country refused, this chapter deals with one of the many NGOs that co-operated in this process and brought their discursive repertoires, organizational set-up and practices back in line with the National Democratic movement. The section ends by addressing the question of why so many NGO actors gave up the relative autonomy they had gained in the preceding years.

The second part of this chapter discusses gender in the National Democratic movement. By focusing on the issue of violence against women, it traces how the National Democratic Women's Movement conceptualized gender issues and how they continued to grapple with tensions between their feminist and national democratic political positions. This tension found a temporary solution in the 'rectification' campaign when gender was explicitly made subordinate to nationalist questions. This second part of the chapter also discusses everyday contestations over

gender, raising certain questions about the relation between changes in gender identity and roles, and the crisis in the National Democratic movement.

Much attention has been given to the underground political dynamics of this crisis, which centred around clashes over military tactics and control. Relatively little, however, has been written about the role of the dynamics of the *legal* dimensions of the National Democratic movement in generating the crisis. This chapter elaborates how the rectification campaign of the Philippine National Democratic movement may partly be viewed as an effort of the leadership of the movement to bring development NGOs back under its reins. It also suggests that the call to go back to basics may partly be understood as a 'patriarchal' reaction to expansions in the room women were finding for manoeuvre.

Stories of NGOs in the Cordillera

Different kinds of externally facilitated local socio-economic work preceded the formation of NGOs in the Cordillera. Development work in the Cordillera, *avant-la-lettre*, had sporadically been organized throughout the 20th century by churches and government agencies, who initiated (mainly women's) associations to promote their programmes, starting with the Rural Improvement Clubs of the Department of Agriculture in the 1930s (Miralao 1993: 21; see also Po and Montiel 1980). Churches normally organized voluntary associations to assist the clergy and some of these engaged in projects to raise living conditions in the villages. Towards the 1980s, projects of the Episcopal Church evolved into a community development programme. Other instances of externally initiated local development work were formed by small-scale projects, facilitated by cadres of the New People's Army (NPA) during the 1970s. As part of their organizing work, they helped to set up projects such as the construction of pig pens, and health education. As one former NPA explained to me, they did this because: "when you came to these villages, the need for such work was very clear".¹ This desire to improve life in the remote areas coincided with the ideological approach of the NPA that, following Mao, wanted to embed armed struggle through organizing activities in the villages.

In 1979 a first NGO was formed as part of the National Democratic movement in the region. After this, NGOs were set up one after the other, and in 1986 ten of them formed the Consortium of Development NGOs in the Cordillera.² There were three reasons why activists of the National Democratic movement resorted to the formation of NGOs in the region. Firstly, the struggles against the Chico River Dams and other resource-extracting projects, had led to an interest in alternative development, based on small-scale, local, people, and environmentally friendly projects. Secondly, setting up NGOs was a way to straighten out some of the institutional tensions in the social movement. The first NGO was set up by activists working in a community development programme of the Episcopal Church in Mountain Province. Looking back, one of them commented that the NGO was formed because:

“The church has its limitations. There is the church hierarchy and decision-making. And it has its own priorities. Even though it says it is pro-people, and it is in many cases, but really it is the church, and it first serves the church. In an NGO you can find your own focus and work on it without constraints because decision-making is not based on existing structures, whether government or church.”³

What this person does not explain, however, is how the NGO was intertwined from the start with the organizational structures of the National Democratic movement. The new NGOs were thus not just independent from the church, but embedded in a different (competing) network. A final impetus to form NGOs came from outside, when it became clear in the early 1980s that international donor agencies tended to favour NGOs over People’s Organizations.

The formation of the NGO Consortium in 1986 was a response to new development opportunities in the region following the installation of President Aquino. Under her government the Cordillera became a popular site for large international development programmes. One of these was the European sponsored Central Cordillera Agricultural Programme (CECAP). The story of CECAP deserves some attention since it shows how development projects may become a tool in political conflict. In a struggle parallel to the negotiations for regional autonomy, CECAP became one of the arenas where contestations over who were to be included in the ordering of the region’s development were decided.

CECAP 4: Political struggles over a development programme

In May 1986, barely three months after the installation of President Aquino, two representatives of the European Union visited the Cordillera to explore possibilities for an EU-assisted development programme. They proposed to facilitate a wide array of small-scale projects for infrastructure, agricultural production and marketing in the communities of the Central Cordillera.⁵ The Department of Agriculture was selected to be the Philippine counterpart. From the start it was clear that one of the objectives of the programme was to curb the communist inspired resistance movement in the region (Severino 1994: 1). The first EU Mission report stated that: “the development of the Cordillera is considered as the most important way to progressively limit and restrain the area of the insurgency” (cited in CRC 1989: 10). Despite reservations prompted by this political agenda, the Cordillera activists were initially interested in co-operating with the EU, because this was an opportunity for the Cordillera People’s Alliance, consisting of some 100 People’s Organizations and a number of NGOs, to expand its socio-economic activities. The Mission report recommended that 10% of the project had to be channelled through NGOs. They decided to form a Consortium of development NGOs, with the explicit aim of entering into a relation with the proposed CECAP project.⁶

The Consortium, with the assistance of a Manila based consultancy firm, drafted a proposal that was endorsed by the CPA. The format and the presentation of the Consortium’s proposal clearly showed that the associated NGOs were in for serious

and competent development work. It consisted of 49 pages, plus 37 pages of annexes. One of the annexes contained a list of 134 proposals for micro-projects that had been put forward by local organizations affiliated to the CPA. An additional 16 maps, flowcharts, and graphic representations of relations and procedures further enhanced the professional outlook of the envisaged programme. One part of the proposal criticized the EU approach, which, according to the Consortium, failed to "situate the obvious problems in the magnitude of their implications and historical origins, and place these in the light of the development of the autonomous region" (CDF 1987: 9). The remainder of the proposal described in great detail how the NGOs could contribute to CECAP, and centred around the key concepts of: participation, social justice, self-reliance, environmental conservation and utilization of local structures and institutions. Concepts such as project parameters, efficiency, risk variable analysis, project-identification, technology transfer and management training were abundantly interspersed throughout the document.

During the time that the Consortium was drafting the proposal, the CPA made several attempts to arrange for a consultation with the team preparing CECAP from the EC and the Department of Agriculture (DA). When the EC and DA continuously cancelled appointments for consultation with the CPA, the Consortium finally submitted its counterpart proposal in February 1987 directly to the European Community. The EC never even replied. Some time later, frustrated by the lack of willingness of the EC representatives to consult with the NGOs, the CPA abandoned its moderately positive attitude towards the programme. A public statement was made in which the project was characterized as being a "dole out" and "destructive to the interests of organized indigenous communities in the Cordillera and their goal for self-reliant development" (CRC 1989: 85). CPA began to write to the EC in Brussels to explain their qualms with the programme and mobilized a number of their European-based contacts to add pressure on the EC. Although these lobbying efforts resulted in delays to the start of the programme, it did not lead to any changes. When the project was approved in October 1987, with a budget of 18.5 million ECU for a duration of five years, there was no provision to include the CPA, the Consortium or any other NGO.⁷

When a journalist asked EC and DA representatives in 1994 why they had barred the participation of the CPA-related NGOs, they pointed to the political nature of the NGOs. The Under-Secretary of the Department of Agriculture said: "why should we deal with the brokers in Baguio, when we already talked to the front-line groups?" This person referred to a meeting in September 1986, when the NPA had abducted an EC delegation and held them for six hours to discuss the CECAP project. During these hours the guerrillas lectured the delegation on the proper implementation of the project and warned them to stay neutral in the ongoing conflict between the NPA and the military. The DA representative used this enforced meeting with the NPA as an excuse for not consulting the NGOs. The EC representatives, in turn, declared that the EC would rather work with "project-oriented", then "politically-oriented" NGOs (Severino 1994).

Apparently, the government and EC representatives viewed CPA and the related NGOs, as belonging to the underground National Democratic movement. From

illegal, but widely accessible readings from the revolutionary movement, it was clear that this movement extended to legal activities. The major revolutions handbook, for example, stated:

“We should excel in combining legal, illegal and semi-legal activities through a wide-spread and stable underground. A revolutionary underground developing beneath democratic and legal or semi-legal activities should promote the well rounded growth of the revolutionary forces, serve to link otherwise isolated parts of the party and the people’s army at every level and prepare the ground for popular uprisings in the future and for the advance of the people’s army” (Guerrero 1979/1970: 185).

Although it seldom appeared openly in the discussions, many people believed that the CPA-related organizations formed a supportive mechanism for the underground movement, if not for their ideological resemblance to the NDF, or because of continuing military allusions and propaganda, then on account of the reputation of key actors in the organizations. In a relatively small region like the Cordillera, informed actors (who were one way or another engaged in regional affairs) normally thought they ‘knew’ who belonged to the underground movement: through their past involvement, by deducting it from the people they were seen with, or simply from rumour. Apparently, no amount of effort, statement, or democratic practice of the CPA-related organizations could outweigh this alleged and tacit ‘knowledge’ among their opponents. In the same way, the professional and impressive proposal of the NGO Consortium did not convince the DA and the EC that it dealt with real development organizations. They did not, in other words, outweigh the reputation of the NGOs as political agents. If anything, the effect of the EC attitude was that the CPA-related groups, experiencing the lack of room for them in the newly created ‘democratic space’, saw their ideological stances confirmed and maintained or even strengthened their allegiance to the National Democratic movement. By doing so, they underestimated, I believe, the genuine desire of the NGOs to work on socio-economic development.

The debacle regarding CECAP did not mean the end of the NGO Consortium. The NGOs continued their development work in diverse socio-economic fields, albeit on a lesser scale than they would have done under CECAP. For their financial operations they were able to access a variety of short, or medium-range projects with foreign donor agencies. What happened next is an ironic affirmation of the multi-faceted nature of NGOs. The same organizations that were deemed too political by the government and the EC to be credible as development organizations became in a few years time, as the next sections will elaborate, too ‘developmental’ and ‘professional’ for the taste of their political counterparts in the National Democratic movement.

Cordillera NGOs 1986-1992: Expansion

In the period from 1986 to 1992 the work of the Consortium of NGOs proliferated and changed. Leaving the political organizing to CPA, the NGOs increasingly concentrated on socio-economic work in a largely expanded area. International work, organizational alliances and co-operation with government agencies continued to change the nature of NGO work. The following account of the Cordillera Women's NGO (CWNGO) is illustrative of these trends in the Consortium.

From 1984 onwards, instances were to be found of women organizing, especially in Baguio City, as part of the anti-dictatorship struggle. In 1987, CWNGO formed, initially as a Baguio organization and within a year, region wide. The founding director of the CWNGO I shall call Amanda. Amanda⁸ was born in the region and has been an activist since the 1970s. She was involved in the set up of several NGOs in the fields of health and as part of a church programme. At the start, Amanda was still working in another office when she hired Violet, a Baguio born college graduate, to start CWNGO with some research activities. She also involved her former high school classmate, Minda, to be the third management member of the NGO. The first year CWNGO operated without funding, except for 'loans' from other NGOs. When in 1988 a German funding agency decided to support CWNGO, the organization expanded rapidly.

CWNGO started with research workshops, contact building, organizing and educating women's organizations. By directing efforts to already existing church women's organizations as well as women's groups within People's Organizations, CWNGO developed within three years a constituency of more than 100 local Women's Organizations. All these organizations were given an education seminar and were invited to join the women's movement. In 1991, this culminated in the formation of a Cordillera wide women's federation called 'Innabuyog'. CWNGO had now expanded its staff to more than 20, and opened four additional offices in the provinces. Two years later there were 35 staff members. The main office in Baguio developed a number of separate 'desks' with projects as diverse as functional literacy, co-operatives, human rights, violence against women (with a separate crisis centre), research and documentation, and a day-care centre. The diversification of the NGO was accompanied by an increasing specialization of staff.

CWNGO continued to receive its basic funding from the German funding agency but several other projects were taken on with different funding agencies, including projects on women's reproductive health, integrated pest management and women co-operatives. Increasingly, CWNGO facilitated funding for local women's projects. Along with the other NGOs in the region, CWNGO's interest in socio-economic work was boosted when a major earthquake hit the Cordillera in 1990. After the quake, money for relief and rehabilitation flooded into the region, and the NGOs occupied themselves repairing foot bridges, water systems and doing other service delivery work.

CWNGO also expanded into international work. The CPA in the 1980s already represented the Cordillera peoples in United Nations circles. This resulted in many contacts, and CPA became a popular guest at international events. The international

work reached a climax in 1993 which was declared the Year of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations, when more than 60 international trips were made by CPA affiliates. As an officer of the CPA, Amanda undertook a number of these trips and soon established a name for herself, receiving many personally addressed invitations. The international dimension was further shaped through the large number of foreign visitors who continued to visit the region, being sent for exposure to the villages. In 1993, CWNGO organized a conference for Asian indigenous women attended by 143 participants. Through this international work the NGOs started to focus more on issues of Indigenous People's Rights. This became apparent from the education material that CWNGO, as well as other NGOs, produced on these issues for the People's Organizations.

CWNGO's work in the villages expanded further through alliance work and cooperation with government agencies. The organization was allied to a number of NGO networks, some of them with technical specializations, such as the environment and small-scale trade. These networks offered skills training to NGO staff-members, further contributing to their professionalization. The networks (as well as funding agencies) often initiated activities that relied on the contacts of NGO staff members in the villages. By obliging with these demands, CWNGO regional staff members increasingly set the agenda of the People's Organizations, instead of the other way around. The fast growth of NGO work, as well as changing political conditions in the region led to increasing problems towards the beginning of the 1990s. Let me elaborate on both of these elements.

Juggling with development discourses

Rapid expansion and diversification had many implications for the organization. While new and often inexperienced staff had to deal with large numbers of village based activities, CWNGO management was largely absorbed in report writing, and international and alliance work often took them away from the office leaving them little time to become personally involved in village-based work. Another implication was that the NGOs work increasingly drew on a multiplicity of discourses. They continued to echo their own political language, but increasingly used notions derived from the international indigenous movement and development agencies.

Following how the language of development was incorporated by the organization illuminates some of the processes occurring during these years. In the time of CECAP, the adoption of development speak had a clear strategic undertone. This continued when most funding agencies were no longer as interested in political NGO activities as they had been during the Marcos' dictatorship, and only wanted to fund socio-economic projects under the heading of poverty alleviation. NGOs felt obliged to couch their proposals in terms favoured by donors. The NGOs also introduced a politically neutral development language in the villages. At the height of, and in the aftermath of intense militarization in the region, NGOs were often branded as communist organizations. In order to avoid problems, NGO staff members started to censor their choice of words, carefully omitting words like imperialism and even human rights, since these phrases instilled fear among

villagers, who would think they might be dealing with the NPA, which would lead to military retribution.

In the course of time, however, the strategic nature of the use of the language of international development faded. Before long, as funding came in and projects were implemented, development work gained a reality firmly engrained in the everyday practices of the NGOs. NGO management and staff alike became increasingly absorbed in the implementation of projects and took pride in their results. One of the things that changed was that NGOs started to demand educational qualifications from their staff, and people with less than a college-degree were either not hired or received a lower salary than their colleagues. This was a blow in the face of former activists among the NGO staff, who had often interrupted their college formation to attend full-time to political work and were now discredited.

Nonetheless, management remained consciously aware of the priorities and history of development thinking. When Violet was asked in 1993 what she meant by 'sustainable development', she replied "I really mean social revolution". When I subsequently asked her about her ideas on participation, she smiled and said "then I also mean social revolution. Everything we do is for a social revolution". For this management actor it was still clear that development was a pseudonym for 'revolution'. However, it soon became obvious that for newer staff, many of whom had no history of political work and were assigned to specific tasks, the development discourse had become natural. These staff members had no idea or had forgotten what the underlying political meaning of the NGO was.

By the end of 1993 Amanda, Minda and Violet as well as managers of the other NGOs of the Consortium had begun to recognize the effects of the fast pace of change in their organizations. They felt alarmed by the signals that the work had become too scattered and too thinly spread. Some People's Organizations began to complain about expectations not being met. Many felt that they had begun to lose their distinct identity in the eyes of the villagers who increasingly began to view the NGOs as project deliverers.

Changing state-region relations

In the 1990s, NGOs found it increasingly difficult to position themselves in relation to the state, due to the changing nature of state-region relations. During the Marcos era, NGOs opposed a government that was demonstrably anti-people. After the transition to democracy, relations and identities had to be redefined.⁹ Immediately after the transition to Aquino a short period followed in which the NGOs tested the ground for democracy. When it became clear that the CPA was marginalized in the regional autonomy talks, that the Consortium was excluded from CECAP, and that Aquino, moreover, had declared Total War against the insurgency leading to heavy militarization in the Cordillera, the NGOs resumed their opposition to the state. They found it already more difficult than before to explain their opposition to their constituency in the villages.¹⁰ In the 1990s, the situation became even more complicated. Heavy militarization in the region subsided, and space was created for NGOs and People's Organizations to participate in local government, through the

installation of Local Development Boards.¹¹ Although the Consortium NGOs of the Cordillera, in most cases, did not become involved in these Boards (in certain areas Boards did not function, in others they were excluded or chose to opt out for various reasons), they increasingly engaged in joint projects with government agencies. CWNGO, for instance, co-operated with the government over its reproductive health project and in setting up village day-care centres.

Such cooperation blurred the distinction between government and NGOs in the eyes of villagers and even for a number of NGO staff members. The identity of NGOs relative to the state became all the more unclear as government agencies increasingly adopted NGO features and vocabulary: they entered into direct funding relations with international agencies and used the language of sustainable and participatory development. A pamphlet of the peasants organizations produced in these years hints at the mounting irritation and frustration of the National Democratic NGOs:

“NGOese like ‘sustainable’, ‘people empowerment’ and other developmental jargon culled from the so-called third sector (the PO-NGO community), have been liberally adopted as their own by government after Marcos in their unceasing doublespeak to deceive and perpetuate neo-colonial rule.” (KMP 1994)

The ensuing perplexity became even more problematic when the government developed a number of policies for the region in 1994, beginning with a number of projects to register and acknowledge claims to ancestral lands. According to the NGOs, these projects were empty gestures because they did not grant property rights to the claimants. The government then announced a new hydrological scheme, the San Roque Dam, which was to be much larger than the Chico Dams were ever going to be. A new Mining Code, moreover, allowed foreign companies to explore large tracts of land, with rights to open mining, the use of timber and water, and even to demand the relocation of people. This convinced the NGOs that the government continued to treat the Cordillera as nothing but a region to extract resources from for the national economy, and they resumed their total opposition to the state. At this time, however, the NGOs found it very difficult to explain their position to the People’s Organizations they worked with. It was not easy to explain to people what was wrong with policies that seemingly met the demands they had been making since the 1970s, especially when people could no longer see the difference between the government and NGOs.

It was thus obvious that there were mounting problems resulting from the proliferation of NGOs on the one hand and political changes on the other. When, at this same time, the leadership of the National Democratic movement summoned the organizations to reassess their work and ‘rectify their errors’, many of the NGO managers were ready to do so.

Rectify the errors: split in the underground movement.

The underground National Democratic Front, spearheaded by the Communist Party of the Philippines, went through a difficult time after 1986. Just before the so-called

EDSA revolution, named after the Highway where the large-scale manifestations took place that led to the downfall of Marcos, the NDF had grown into a major revolutionary force. It reportedly had a mass base of 10 million and a membership of 35,000 cadres at its disposal. It operated on 60 guerrilla fronts in 63 provinces of the Philippines. With the EDSA revolution the NDF saw much of the impact of years of organizing being reaped by an elite government and its middle-class followers. An uneasiness in defining its role under the democratic government of Aquino, increased military harassment and mounting internal problems led, according to the movement's own assessment, to a reduction of its mass base by 1990 to 40% of its 1986 level. The organization had also been seriously damaged by purges within its own ranks following the unmasking of a number of state military infiltrators into NDF organizations. Suspicions that so-called Deep Penetrating Agents had in large numbers joined the ranks of the NDF organizations, led to the killing, detainment, torture or expelling of hundreds of NDF people between 1985 and 1991, especially in Mindanao and Southern Luzon. Conflict over military tactics and the leadership of the National Democratic movement finally led to a split in 1992. This split was triggered by a document, authored by Armando Liwanag, called "Reaffirm our Basic Principles and Rectify the Errors". The document was intended to bring the movement back to its pre-1986 shape by 'going back to the basics' (Liwanag 1992).

Armando Liwanag is commonly assumed to be a pseudonym for Jose Maria Sison.¹² This former professor of the University of the Philippines founded the CPP in 1969. He modelled the movement by combining Marx' class-based analysis with the Leninist call for a vanguard organization leading the proletarian masses, and Mao Zedung's rural-based revolutionary tactics. Sison continued to lead the Party throughout several periods of detainment and, from 1986, as a political exile in the Netherlands. The 'Reaffirm...' -document can partly be read as his attempt to stay in the saddle. It is the outcome of, and at the same time brings about, a split in the organization and leadership of the movement. Most of the document concerns the ideology, strategies and organization of the Party and the armed struggle. Some of it, however, explicitly focuses on above-ground (legal) offices, including the NGOs. One paragraph in particular applies to these offices. It reads:

"There has been a proliferation of legal offices and institutions in conjunction with the increase in staff organs and a continuous build up in them of dropouts or near dropouts from the Party and the mass movement. An increasing number of political prisoners have also been lured into these offices instead of returning to direct work among the masses and the countryside where they are badly needed. Party work and Party life in them are often buried in office routines and office work away from the masses and the mass movement and where petty bourgeoisie views, habits, loose discipline and craving for comfort are strong and often go unchallenged." (*ibid.*: 326)

NGOs, in the view of Sison, had changed from instruments of the NDF into competition. The Party had supported and even initiated the formation of many NGOs since the 1970s, but always had difficulty in defining the role of socio-

economic work. This work was considered instrumental to the creation of the revolutionary mass base. On the other hand, it was considered dangerous because it could become 'reformist', that is, bringing about change *within* the ruling system, without systematically supplanting it. With the expansion of NGOs after 1986, this fear seemed to come true. The party had also endorsed NGOs to generate funds, either directly or through revolutionary taxation. However, towards the end of the 1980s, Party revenues from NGOs started to decline, because NGO management negotiated to retain larger sums of their funding to actually implement programmes. Finally, NGOs began to provide institutional space for outright opposition to the Party leadership, both by providing venues for discussion in the period leading up to the split, and by serving as a basis and platform for alternative 'progressive' agendas in the period thereafter (Clarke 1998: 113-8; CDP 1991).

Rectifying Cordillera NGOs

The 'Reaffirm...'-document denounces NGO practices as they had evolved. It called upon them to "go back to their basics". As we saw in chapter 1, this led to vehement conflicts in NGOs in Metro Manila and several other regions of the country, where many NGOs turned their backs on the National Democratic movement. In the Cordillera, however, NGO managements decided to go along with the call to rectify their errors, referred to as the 'rectification campaign'. Certain individuals decided to resign from office, but on the whole NGOs stayed loyal to the National Democratic movement. For a time, the debate demoralized many NGO actors who saw their movement set back by years, and were confronted with the 'denouncement' or 'betrayal' of many National leaders who had for years been friends and respected leaders. Nevertheless, the regional movement, including the NGOs of the Consortium, started to work seriously on the rectification campaign by the end of 1993.

The rectification campaign was to last for several years. With admirable stamina and the typical thoroughness of the movement, round after round of evaluations were held, using the 'Reaffirm....'-document as a term of reference. Experiences from the start of the movement in the 1970s were meticulously summed up and analysed. After a next phase of internal conferences to capture the findings of the sub-evaluations, the overall findings were submitted for discussion and feed-back to the different organizations. Once the assessment was completed, policies had to be reformulated and the work reorganized. The new directions had to be disseminated through education sessions, and co-ordination procedures between organizations and education material for the People's Organizations were all redrafted. When changes were implemented, the reorganizations were intensely monitored and readjusted where necessary. For some time, the rectification was so time-consuming that NGO work in the region virtually stopped, except for routine follow up of ongoing commitments to People's Organizations and funding agencies. Political campaigns responding to developments in the region came almost to a standstill. By the end of 1995, however, it was felt that the movement was sufficiently back into shape to pick up loose ends and respond pro-actively to developments in the region.

Painful as the evaluations were at times (dotted by criticisms and self-criticisms), through the process many revived their enthusiasm and motivation. By early 1996, many NGO actors, especially from management echelons, felt that the rectification process has succeeded in better tuning their policies and practices, and in strengthening their organizations.

Evaluation of NGOs during the rectification campaign led to the identification of several 'errors' of a reformist nature: these were labelled as 'populism', 'legalism' (giving pre-eminence to legal over illegal work), 'economism' and 'NGOism'. Since 1986, according to the evaluation, the NGOs had increasingly moved away from the political movement they belonged to. They had become 'populist' service institutions that aimed for visible impact, without linking their activities to the basic problems defined by the movement as 'feudalism', 'imperialism' and 'bureaucratic capitalism'. They had become 'economist', by prioritising socio-economic work over political education, and neglecting the political education of their own staff. As a result, it was concluded that NGOs contributed to an "increasing project-mentality" among the Cordillera population, meaning that people expect immediate material benefits from their involvement with outside organizations.¹³

The term 'NGOism' captures this critique. The 'malady of NGOism' as it was called, is defined by the National Democratic peasant movement as "a state of being engrossed in unholistic developmentalism leading to bureaucratic tendencies in dealing with the people that the NGOs have sworn to serve" (KMP 1994: 13). In a statement about reformism in the Philippine NGO community, the peasant movement charges that

"NGOs afflicted with this malady have a concept of development segregated from the people's movement, focused on welfare, productivity and sustainability concerns and unmindful of challenging the base structures responsible for the people's emiserization. Victims of NGOism also magnify the NGO position in social transformation." (*ibid.*)

The pamphlet identifies seven major symptoms of the malady of NGOism, i.e.: loyalty to the funding agency rather than to the people's movement; socio-economic work without the need for class struggle and changes in the social structure; bureaucratism; corruption of the NGO service orientation; professionalism; adoption of corporate practices and standards; and competition or 'turfing' (*ibid.*: 14-7).

All in all, it was concluded that in the period from 1987 to 1992 certain basic principles had been lost. To rectify this, a large number of measures were taken that profoundly affected the organizational structures, practices and discursive repertoires of the NGOs. Thorough political education was to ensure that NGO staff members (re)mastered the proper language of the movement. To avoid confusion, the oppositional stance to government policies was no longer to be watered down by simultaneously co-operating with government line agencies, which was going to be limited to a minimum. Another important measure consisted of the devolution of NGOs. In order to break down the top-heavy structures of NGOs, with too many specialist staff members in the office as compared to organizers in the field, as many staff as possible were re-deployed from the Baguio offices to the provinces. Office-

based management was to be much more selective in taking on alliance work and international assignments. Travelling abroad was to be restricted. In order to better integrate and co-ordinate local work, NGOs pooled their staff in area-based teams, largely setting aside their separate specializations. The teams primarily focused on the (re)building of People's Organizations in the villages. A method was designed by which POs were organized in a step-by-step approach called 'solid organizing' (see chapter 5).

Thus the NGOs of the Consortium were firmly brought back into the National Democratic movement. The NGOs wanted to achieve ideological coherence and systematically design structures and practices in line with this ideology. They wished to become organizations with an unmistakable and clear identity. In subsequent chapters, we will see how this worked in practice. At this moment, I want to address the question of why NGO actors wanted to make these changes. After all, the measures had vast implications for their relative autonomy as well as for the individual room for manoeuvre of NGO managers. Moreover, some explanation is required of why NGO actors who had been exposed to and had come to believe in a multitude of ideas, resorted again to an ideology that reduced the problems of society to the three themes of 'feudalism', 'imperialism', and 'bureaucrat capitalism', defined as central in the 1960s. Why would actors operating in a globalized world convert to such a reductionist scheme?

Responses

Before trying to explain the consent of many NGO managers to the rectification, let me first reiterate that not all of them did appreciate the new policies. Amanda decided not to join in the rectification, and found her own way by creating a new NGO outside the National Democratic movement. She was one of the few regional leaders who opted out of the process. Especially when the rectification gained momentum, other individuals who disagreed saw no other options but to withdraw. Minda, for example, explained to me that she did not bother much with the discussions. "I just tag along", she said, "and in the meantime I look for another job". Several others, who were not fully convinced of the rectification, were nonetheless motivated to move along for several reasons. Some did not want to leave the movement for reasons of belonging, a sense of family, a loyalty that made one stay, despite one's reservations. Others took the rectification movement in stride. As one of them said:

"You have to see the history of the movement as waves. Presently, they are closing down. Once the movement is consolidated you can be sure it will open up again [to alternative ideas]. That is how it happened before and how it will happen again."

This person expressed patience to wait for the rectification to blow over. Once the rectification was operationalized, a certain difference among NGO managers was also apparent in the extent to which they actually implemented the measures foreseen in the new policies. The rectification campaign never came to a definite

closure, as discussions continued about appropriate strategies and a proper balancing of alternative approaches.

Nonetheless, a number of factors appear to have been relevant for those NGO managers that, wholly or half-heartedly, reshaped NGO work in the region. One source of consent or inspiration was found in the legacy of the National Democratic movement before 1986. A large number of NGO managers had grown up as activists in the 1970s and 1980s and were excited at the prospect of reviving those years. "Finally", exclaimed one of them after a meeting, "we will step away from socio-economic work. I really missed the social activism". Among some of the younger managers this legacy acquired mythical proportions and they were ardent admirers of Joma Sison. They looked upon his writings, if not as the gospel, at least with a lot of goodwill. This was the case with Violet and her husband, who was also involved in NGO work. When Amanda, and some time later Minda, left CWNGO, Violet took charge of implementing the rectification in the office.

Secondly, the critique entailed in the 'Reaffirm...'-document found clear resonance in the disappointment among leaders with the meagre and scattered NGO performance in the region, both concerning their socio-economic work and their political aspirations. There had indeed been a lot of problems. The straightforward analysis of these problems provided in the document gave a clear indication for strategies to remedy them. Although they looked back at a period of errors they now had their work clearly cut out for the period to follow. Related to this, I was often struck by the enormous sense of personal responsibility NGO leaders felt for past mistakes. I remember in particular one provincial manager. He was a professional man with a full-time job, who co-ordinated NGO work in his spare time. He seemed dragged down by perpetual fatigue, and over a beer I asked how he was doing. He then presented me with an awesome list of tasks for the near future, to which he added an equally awesome list of problems and obstacles he foresaw. When I asked him where he found the motivation to move on with this Herculean workload, he responded:

"There is the option to simply continue with my ordinary work. Especially since there is family pressure to do so. But I am still motivated. I feel responsible for many of the mistakes that were made. So I have a duty to take part in correcting them. We just have to start again."¹⁴

Finally, a strong impetus to believe in the rightness of the 'back-to-basics' ideology was provided by government policies. Despite economic growth, the majority of the Philippine population continued to live in abject poverty. In the Cordillera, as was stipulated above, military oppression and the violation of civil human rights had decreased in the last years, but had been replaced with economic policies that were possibly even more devastating. For the National Democratic activists these developments contained ample evidence that, politically speaking, nothing had changed: the country was still reigned through imperialism and bureaucrat capitalism.¹⁵

Let me finally say something about the response of CWNGO staff members who were not part of management. The headlines of the rectification were explained to staff members through education sessions. Some found the change of work

meaningful, others merely followed the instructions of the management. There were also quite a few, however, who did not like the turn of events. They could not immediately resign for financial reasons, but silently looked around for other job opportunities. The number of staff decreased substantially. Particularly dissatisfied were those who had been involved in politics for several years, but at a low level, for example through participation in study groups. They felt excluded from the discussions of the rectification movement. As one of them explained:

“It has been going on for so long now. Always when I ask when we will join the discussions, or when they will talk with us, they tell me: ‘later, first we have to work things out at the regional level.’ But it seems later never comes.”

Most of these middle cadre staff members left CWNGO towards the completion of the rectification, although few of them openly expressed a relation between their resignation and developments in the office (see also chapter 7). Before thinking through what NGO actors’ responses to the rectification campaign mean for our understanding of development discourse, let me first elaborate on gender and the role of women in the National Democratic movement.

Stories of gender in the National Democratic movement

This section deals with the question of how National Democratic women’s organizations fared in the rectification. CWNGO belongs to a nation-wide women’s movement called GABRIELA, formed in 1984. This coalition has always emphasized class and nationalist dimensions of women’s oppression, in the belief that “equality with men is meaningless if we can only be equal with them in poverty and oppression” (Dacanay 1998: 10). For this reason, the major issues addressed by GABRIELA are land reform, labour exploitation, and human rights abuses, with special reference to the gender dimension of these. They also address body politics such as the export of female labour, sex trafficking, prostitution, and (reproductive) health. These are high on the agenda and for good reason, considering the enormous number of women affected and their often heartbreaking experiences. Gender relations in the household on the other hand receive far less attention, and are rarely considered a priority. Nonetheless, this section focuses on how domestic violence against women is addressed by the women’s movement. In addition, it focuses on gender issues within the National Democratic organizations. This choice of topics should be seen as a methodological device. More than any other issue, the treatment of gender in the family and in the organizations reveals conflicting positions and power relations in the National Democratic movement.

The history of GABRIELA is locally specific yet related to global developments in women’s or feminist movements. In 1984, Robin Morgan launched the slogan ‘Sisterhood Is Global’. Like many feminists in the 1970s, Morgan asserts that women share a common worldview as result of a common condition. This idea has been thoroughly discredited since, with women pointing to divisions based on class and

race. It has also become common sense that there is no one singular kind of women's movement. Just as gender has come to be seen as evolving at particular historical junctures and constantly subject to negotiation (see Lamphere 1987; Moore 1988), so feminist movements must be contextualized to be understood. As Mohanty (1991) argues: there are many feminist agendas and movements.

It is one thing to assert that feminist movements share with other social movements the constructed and emerging character discussed in the previous chapter. However, at the same time we have to acknowledge that particular frozen images of women's movements continue to play a role in discussions and practices of women engaged in collective action. One such idea is that feminism is a product of 'decadent' Western capitalism of no relevance to (poor) women in the Third World (Jayawardena 1986: 2). Notwithstanding the work of people like Jayawardena, showing that many early feminist struggles arose in the Third World, the *image* of feminism as a Western concept has deterred many Southern women's movements from adopting the word (Johnson-Odim 1991: 315; Basu 1995: 6-9). Time and time again dividing lines have been drawn during international conferences where women from the South emphasize that women's oppression should be understood in a wider framework than encompassing gender only, including class, nationality and race. These dividing lines have a certain justification in differing women's practices, but are just as much related to habits of pigeon-holing 'others' in fixed positions (Wieringa 1995: 1-23). It is difficult to talk about women's movements without feeding into stereotyped notions of feminism or anti-feminism.

The Philippine women's 'movement' consists of a large number of organizations divided according to their position regarding women's oppression, running along two axes: cultural and political.¹⁶ The cultural axis originates in debates on the complementarity of gender in South East Asia.¹⁷ Positions range from stating that women in the Philippines are not oppressed, pointing to the relatively high status of women compared to other cultures, to claiming that women *are* nonetheless oppressed. The latter is arrived at by referring to the cultural ruptures caused by the colonial period introducing inequality, or by referring to evidence that the nature of Southeast Asian complementarity is such that "the prerogatives and prestige of men typically exceed those of women" (Ong and Peletz 1995: 7). Those organizations stressing complementarity denounce those speaking of women's oppression as 'anti-male', with the charge of being 'Western biased' always around the corner. Although one used to find this position predominantly among 'conservative' organizations, it also plays a role in the 'progressive' ones. It has been more pronounced in organizations of indigenous women, who are thought to have retained more remnants of pre-colonial, complementary culture.

The political axis refers to debates regarding the positioning of gender *vis-à-vis* other sources of women's oppression. It ranges from locating women's oppression solely in their gender to viewing women's oppression as stemming exclusively from class and national factors.¹⁸ Organizations move along this axis trying to define their own position, while at the same time boxed into the extremities of the axis by other women's organizations, mixed organizations and the media. The first women's organization that explicitly tried to combine a gender approach with a political

outlook was Makibaka. It sprang from the student movement that emerged in the late 1960s (see chapter 1).

Makibaka was formed in 1970. Its first public activity was the picketing of a major beauty contest, echoing a similar picket held earlier that year in London. Immediately, Makibaka was scorned in the press as a bunch of 'anti-male', 'bra-burning' Western feminists propagating 'free sex', and practically denounced by comrades in the student movement. However, the manifesto that accompanied the picket makes it clear that Makibaka firmly placed the event in the political context of the Philippines. It says that:

"women have a far more important role in our society than participation in such inane activities as beauty contests. Makibaka believes that in these crucial times women of the Philippines should participate in the struggle for change towards a just and equitable society."

It further said that women should be emancipated from "feudal restraints which prevent their full participation in the struggle for National Democracy" (Taguiwalo 1994). Debates between Makibaka members and their student comrades were soon cut short by the imposition of Martial Law, when all such organizations were banned. Makibaka lived on as the underground women's organization, and one of the member organizations of the National Democratic Front. Lorena Barros, who founded the organization, became a NPA guerrilla fighter. She became one of the heroes-cum-martyrs of the revolution when she was killed by government troops in 1976.

In the early 1980s new women's organizations began to emerge from the National Democratic dominated anti-dictatorship struggle.¹⁹ In 1984, the nation-wide coalition of women's organizations, GABRIELA,²⁰ was formed. The coalition was named after Gabriela Silang, a heroine of the Philippine resistance against Spanish colonisers. A large statue in Manila depicts her with waving hair, riding a horse and raising a sword. The backbone of the coalition was formed by large alliances of peasant women (*Amihani*), urban poor women (*Samakana*), and women workers (*KMK*). From the start, GABRIELA took a firm political position as part of the National Democratic movement. After the restoration of democracy in 1986, this led to clashes. Two organizations (*Pilipina* and *Kalayaan*) left GABRIELA, because they advocated for a separate women's movement outside of the overall organizational framework of the National Democrats. In the words of Santiago, "Pilipina insisted that dictates from leftist male leaders had a debilitating effect on women and women's movements". *Kalayaan* "insisted on its independence and pushed for use of the term *feminist*, despite charges that it was a Western and middle-class concept" (Santiago 1995: 121). GABRIELA declared it was happy to continue without these middle-class-oriented organizations. In 1992, the coalition consisted of 80 organizations, with a total membership of 40,000 women.

The treatment of gender issues within GABRIELA as part of the National Democratic movement continues, however, to be problematic. The National Democratic women's organizations started in the early 1980s with the aim of involving more women in the anti-dictatorship struggle, with the bonus that women were effective in attracting funding. Long-time GABRIELA leaders remember the

international women's conference in Nairobi in 1985 as a turning point in this instrumental approach, towards a more feminist perspective. One of them said in 1994: "when the GABRIELA delegation came back from Nairobi the talk was all about Global Sisterhood and women's oppression". For several years GABRIELA sought to continue dialogue with international women's organizations, in part through the organization of a number of WISAPs: 'Women's International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines'. At the same time, the coalition maintained a critical distinction from Western feminism, by strongly emphasising nationalist and class issues. Hints that Gabriela would not have been feminist were rebutted by remarks that such charges are "patronizing and condescending forms of intellectual colonialism".²¹

Violence against women

Ideologically, GABRIELA women increasingly identified with socialist-feminism. They defined their coalition as 'distinct but integral' to the National Democratic movement. How the organization endeavoured to strike a balance between the socialist and the feminist becomes apparent when we follow how International Women's Day was organized over the years. Every year, International Women's Day on March 8 is surrounded with a campaign. The themes for these campaigns are derived from ongoing political struggles, to which GABRIELA adds a gender dimension. In 1987, the organization followed the political slogan 'Peace, Based on Justice' with a focus on human rights abuses against women. Some years later when 'Ousting the US Bases' formed the political agenda, GABRIELA substantiated this call by elaborating the plight of women prostitutes around the American military bases. In 1993, however, GABRIELA stepped away from this tradition and chose a theme with a clear gender connotation: 'Violence Against Women'. The country was shaken at the time by a series of highly publicised rape killings and GABRIELA was involved in lobbying for an anti-rape bill. Moreover, through research and education activities GABRIELA leaders came to realize that many women in the Philippines experienced domestic violence, with estimates as high as 60% of all women. As one GABRIELA leader told me:

"Our 'Violence Against Women' campaign started with education with women. When we told them about the military abuse of women, they responded that they had no experience of that. Their problem was with their own husbands who beat them."²²

In the brochure that GABRIELA wrote as part of the campaign, only one or two sentences are devoted to men as perpetrators of violence. The remainder of the brochure blames violence against women entirely on the Philippine government. The state is held responsible because it maintains anti-women policies such as "the indiscriminate selling of Filipino migrant workers", through "its own officials and agencies violating women's rights" and by its "lack of interest in pursuing cases of violence against women". The brochure concludes that government must be held accountable for the prevalence of violence against women (GABRIELA 1993). Despite

the careful political setting of the issue by GABRIELA (to the extent of inviting criticism from other feminist organizations), the campaign was criticized by a number of National Democratic organizations. One organization reacted by saying the issue was too personal and asked why GABRIELA did not choose instead the more poignant issues such as difficulties with the provision of electricity resulting in frequent 'brownouts' (*sic*). The youth sector complained that the brochure put men first as responsible and the state only second.

From the start, the need for a separate women's movement was regularly questioned by people from the 'mixed' National Democratic organizations. This put the women of GABRIELA always on the defensive (Angeles 1989: 213-6). The National Democratic leadership endorsed the women's movement, if only for the practical advantages mentioned above, but in practice it seemed that raising gender issues was only given space as long as it added to protesting against the government. The tolerance for gender stopped short when men were implicated as agents of women oppression. This was even more so when this concerned men *within* the movement. This became clear from responses to an interview given by a leader of the peasant women of Amihan in 1992. She mentioned that several men, *even those who were organized*, prevented their wives from participating in Amihan activities, or harassed women organizers (Balmaceda-Gutierrez 1992: 34). In response to the interview, the regional branch of the farmer's organization of KMP, which is the 'mixed' counterpart of Amihan, want nothing more to do with Amihan. As one Amihan officer said:

"we could not understand why they were so furious, because it is common knowledge that wife battering happens. But they said it is baseless."²³

The discussions triggered by the 'violence against women' campaign, were soon overtaken by the debate between the Reaffirmists and Rejectionists in the National Democratic movement. As a nation-wide coalition, GABRIELA was heavily affected by this debate, and a number of national GABRIELA leaders left the organization.²⁴ The core of the coalition continued to work within the framework of the National Democrats. In the rectification campaign, GABRIELA went back to basics and reiterated its priority for class-based and anti-imperialist struggles. In particular, the evaluation concluded that the adoption of a socialist-feminist framework was an error, because it implied a kind of equal importance to both elements, instead of prioritising the socialist. In 1995 GABRIELA again went to the international women's conference, in Beijing. This time, they were not searching for new ideas, but had a clear mission to meet like-minded women and bring anti-imperialism back on the agenda of the international women's movement.²⁵ Makibaka was also in Beijing, distributing a pamphlet warning against the 'gender trap' with which the Beijing Platform for Action was portrayed as an "Imperialist Scheme for Co-opting the World's Women", excluding the possibilities for empowerment of women through revolution (Makibaka 1995: 40). The two organizations had some very well attended activities and rallied the support of hundreds of women in a protest march during the talk of Hilary Clinton to the NGO forum.

Rectifying gender in the Cordillera

CWNGO was from the start a member of GABRIELA, and Amanda was in particular a close friend of GABRIELA's national leaders. CWNGO adopted a socialist-feminist view similar to that of GABRIELA. However, to the trinity of nationalist, class and gender oppression, CWNGO added a fourth dimension of ethnic oppression to characterize the condition of indigenous women. In the early years, CWNGO was outspoken in claiming that gender issues should be addressed within the National Democratic organizations. Violet, for example, named her daughter Alexandra, after a Russian woman who, as she said, "had been kicked out of the Politburo because of her feminist standpoint". The initial feminist position of CWNGO was also apparent from what may be called one of the 'founding myths' of the organization. This was the oft-repeated story (with slight variations) of how the organization acquired its first funding:

"In 1987, a woman was coming from a German funding agency to attend a conference in Manila. She had written a letter to another NGO of the Consortium to say she wanted to talk to women in the Cordillera. Though we had been working for several years as CWNGO, we were never told about this letter. We only found out by sheer accident. And so we asked to meet her. But they said: 'we will talk to her ourselves, because most of us are women after all'. In the end they grudgingly arranged a short meeting just before she was leaving. Her plane left at 9, and we were meeting her at 7. And she was so happy to meet with us. She then asked us for a proposal. So, that is how it all began."

The story brings out an image of determined women who had, despite obstructions, managed to establish their institution. Violet was also fond of recalling how male companions in mixed organizations had not taken CWNGO seriously until it acquired its own financial base, proving in her eyes how important economic independence is for women.

The first time that CWNGO ran into problems because of its gender focus was, again, around the issue of domestic violence. In 1989, CWNGO conducted health research among women in a small-scale mining area. One of the findings of the research was that 50% of the women experienced wife-beating. Among the husbands were several leaders of the miners' organizations. These objected to the publication. According to them, CWNGO had damaged their reputation by reporting these findings. In the first instance, CWNGO became more defiant by this experience. They related the protests of the miners during several public occasions to substantiate their idea that a separate women's movement was needed apart from but integral to the 'mixed' National Democratic organization. As we shall see, this interpretation of the event would later be changed.

CWNGO continued to work on issues of violence against women. Approached by women victims or their relatives, CWNGO set up a number of campaigns relating to cases of rape and sexual harassment. In writing about these cases, CWNGO emphasized that violence against women was alien to indigenous culture, or met

with strict community sanctions. The cases turned into public campaigns were those where the perpetrator was either a lowland educated government official or a member of the military. After some time, CWNGO decided to open a Women's Crisis Centre, which attracted two staff and several volunteers. The centre provided counselling and legal advice and engaged in lobbying government agencies to get them to become more proactive regarding violence against women. Deliberately, CWNGO located the Crisis Centre in a separate office in town. The reason given was that women needed to be able to go to the centre unobserved and in private. Prominent among the projected clientele were NGO staff members and wives of men in the NGOs and regional organizations. The Crisis Centre thus turned into an acknowledgement that violence against women also occurred within NGOs and the National Democratic organizations.

Towards the end of 1993, there were increasing complaints about CWNGO's education seminars, in particular a two-day Basic Women Orientation, which lay the groundwork for their nationalist feminist position. According to CWNGO and other NGO staff members, this education was considered *divisive* in the community. For example, they reported inquiries from men as to whether the organization wanted women "to wear pants". In some cases, the education indeed played into locally sensitive gender issues.²⁶ On the other hand, stories abounded of how women had not appreciated some of the messages or how rumours were passed about its content among men who were excluded from these all-women activities. This led to considerations among CWNGO staff to redesign the training for women and men together. However, by this time the damage had been done and the Basic Women's Orientation and CWNGO had acquired a reputation in the wider NGO network of being 'divisive'.

As mentioned, when the rectification came, women's work in the region was largely deemed an error, and the socialist-feminist approach was abandoned as a 'disorientation' because it implied class and gender oppression were equally important. Instead, referring to Marx and Engels, it was stated that patriarchy was, in fact, a derivative of class formation. In an education seminar of several days, for example, where the history of women's oppression was explained to middle cadre staff members of the NGOs, one of the participants raised a question about the pervasiveness of gender-oppression. The husband of Violet, who had ascended during the rectification process from one of the youth leaders to a major regional ideologue, replied:

"I want to clarify that women's oppression is not separate, but stems from private property. This indicates the direction for the solution of women oppression, namely in class struggle. This is not economic determinism as some people might think. *If you had read as much of Marx as I have, you would understand that the economic basis interrelates with cultural change.*"²⁷

Women's work was also considered to be culturally inappropriate for the indigenous population. At the time of the rectification another story gained mythical

proportions. This was a story of how Manila-based feminists had come to the region to give a so-called 'women's orientation' in the province:

"When the session came to women's bodies, they suddenly removed their shirts, showing their breasts, saying: 'look how beautiful women's bodies are'. And these women in the villages were just so embarrassed."

After careful evaluation, Violet reconsidered her opinion about the conflict with the miners organizations. She now said that it had been wrong to publish the findings, because it had not helped women: "The men were so angry that the women had told us stories, that instead of stopping they had hit them even more". When some months later mixed NGOs complained to CWNGO about an interview they were about to publish in which an NGO staff member stated that her husband failed to help her with household chores even though they were both full-time activists, CWNGO without more ado withdrew the publication.

Hence, the rectification gave a strong message about raising gender issues in relation to the National Democratic movement. The message stipulated that attention to gender was still possible, even important, but should never be divisive. As long as CWNGO continued to address state or economic oppression of women it was all right. But, they had to keep their hands off gender relations within the household and especially gender relations within the organizations. One of the measures taken by CWNGO to conform to the rectification was that their staff from then on were going to operate with teams of mixed NGOs and were to refrain from encouraging women to maintain their separate organizations. Special education for women was suspended. And, of course, the Crisis Centre was closed.

Although it was stipulated by the end of 1995 that some of these measures were temporary and that gender work should continue after a revision of the education materials, gender work was still at a standstill by the time I visited the area in January 1999. When I talked to women in the NGO network during this visit, it was obvious that they had not lost their interest in women's issues. However, those had no priority any more. After Amanda and Minda had left the organization CWNGO was solely managed by Violet. She concentrated on organizing middle-class women in Baguio. Women work in the provinces was left to provincial area teams. But, according to one of the remaining CWNGO provincial staff, women had no place on the agenda of those teams, at least not in her province. There had been no general meeting of CWNGO for three years. Only in the course of 1999 new activities for women were initiated and the regional federation of Innabuyog was revived. This time its major policy point was not to be divisive

Informal gender repertoires

So far, I have dealt with the ideological struggles regarding gender and how the more or less formal relations between women and mixed organizations informed these. However, there is another side to the story relating to more informal, cultural changes. It is the story of how NGO women started to break away from the cultural prescriptions for middle-class women in the Philippines and how this was resented

by men in the NGOs (and a number of women too), including the male leadership of the National Democratic movement. It is a more tentative story. It is constructed from reading certain trends, from pieces of conversation and observations. It is nevertheless an important story to tell.

From Makibaka's beginnings, women increasingly addressed a large range of gender issues through their everyday practices and discourses. Their practice over the years became replete with statements about women's roles and gender relations. In the first place, they focused attention on the implications of motherhood and other issues pertinent to women activists in the National Democratic movement. One of the major criticisms of the movement at the time of the Debate in 1992 concerned its "instrumental view of people", a "tendency to evaluate their worth mainly on whether they advance or obstruct the Left's class-determined political objectives" (Bello 1992: 6).²⁸ This problem was clearly felt by women comrades who had children. Some considered their pregnancy mainly as an interruption of their political work and left their children with relatives as soon as they could. Many, however, felt there was no sympathy for their problems or felt excluded by virtue of their motherhood. One woman I interviewed clearly remembered how hurt she felt when her husband was told, in her presence, that she could not be relied on for a position of political leadership because she had to take care of her children. The women of the underground Makibaka regularly raised the issue of the lack of attention or the trivialization of issues relating to childbirth and childcare (Siapno 1995: 232).

At the same time, National Democratic women in the NGOs were rapidly expanding their room to manoeuvre, especially after 1986. A sign of those times is the growth of lesbian organizations within the National Democratic Women's Movement. While lesbianism in the mid-1980s was associated by many with Western women trying to 'seduce' Filipinas during international events,²⁹ this was quickly overtaken by the emergence of explicit lesbians in the women's organizations, writing and organizing seminars on the issue as well as introducing it as a normal aspect of people relations and office life largely accepted or at least openly discussed (see also chapter 7).³⁰ Married women, on the other hand, increasingly explored ideas of women engaging in extra-marital affairs. It is common and quite accepted among Philippine men to have a 'querida' (mistress). Now women joked it was their turn, and some of them actually put this into practice, either with a Filipino or with one of the many foreign visitors.

NGO women, fully absorbed in their work, spent practically all their time with their office mates, extending into occasional beer drinking sessions. Such sessions were full of jokes and teasing, about women, gender relations and sexuality. Those women who were neither lesbian nor married joked about their auto-erotic sexuality, referred to with that wonderful activist sense of humour as 'armed struggle'. When I went to Beijing, one of my NGO friends in Baguio asked me to buy her a copy of Mao Zedong poems, as well as some pieces of silk underwear. When I told one of the GABRIELA leaders on our way to the airport about this funny combination of orders, she heartily laughed and exclaimed: "Now, that is the Filipino woman activist!" Not only did these women step away from the ideal picture of the 'good soldier' of the National Democratic movement, in their songs, political statements and in their

lifestyles they had travelled very far from Maria Clara: the sweet, docile, obedient and self-sacrificing character in the famous novel *Noli me Tangere* of Rizal, which for a long time epitomized middle-class Filipino women.³¹

My interest in the significance of these everyday practices of women is twofold. In the first place, I am interested in knowing what role such changes played in the way the debate manifested itself and, in particular, how women's organizations were dealt with in the rectification. When Jose Maria Sison condemned the "habits, loose discipline and craving for comfort in the offices" (see above), I wonder to what extent he was referring to the changing identities and roles of women. In the volume edited by Valentine Moghadam (1994) it was suggested that the upsurge of nationalist or fundamentalist ideologies (Hindu, Islamic and Christian alike), effecting restrictions on women, could partly be explained as a reaction against changing roles for women. Likewise, I suggest that Sison's 'back to basics' call, apart from being the reaction of a revolutionary loosing ground, was also a patriarchal reaction against changing everyday gender relations.

This was never openly stated, but is based on impressions, informal comments, frowning faces and other small indications of male redress when confronted with signals or charges from these self-conscious women. This is not limited to the leadership of the movement, but also concerns men in local organizations opposing separate women groups, or resenting the influence GABRIELA had on women's behaviour. One example among numerous small events happened during a seminar in September 1993, when NGO workers had to identify a core gender problem in groups. One male group started their presentation by introducing their group as the Diego group. Named after Diego Silang the husband of Gabriela Silang, the acronym stood for: D'organization for the Immediate Elimination of all GABRIELA Organizations. The core problem they presented was the 'gender insensitivity of women'. When I asked one of them why he was so opposed to GABRIELA, he explained that a local GABRIELA organizer had advised the wife of a friend to abandon her husband. Further probing on my part revealed that the man was a repetitive wife-beater, but nonetheless this man thought GABRIELA had no right to interfere in family life.

In the second place, the temporary closure on women's oppression and gender issues in discourses during the rectification process appears much less definite if we take into account the everyday negotiations of gender. In informal practices and interactions women continued to enact and defend their newly acquired freedoms and lifestyles. Often this happened in the form of jokes. The nature of jokes and irony is double-faced. During the rectification campaign, jokes seemed in the first place to be a confirmation of the rectification, a ground where people could play out the new directions and show off their political correctness. Many jokes centred on teasing about being reformist. However, it was also through jokes that negotiations continued over gender values in everyday life. When somebody commented about the jeans and short hair of my baby daughter: "she might become a lesbian", somebody else replied "never mind her gender, as long as she has the correct class position". These and similar jokes point to the complexity and inter-relation of discourses in everyday life. Even though discursive order appeared to be restored in

the NGOs, gender issues could not equally be 'boxed in' in everyday practices and confrontations.

Theoretical commentary

The timing and direction of the rectification campaign of the National Democratic movement as described in this chapter is not so difficult to explain. The rectification campaign with its call to go back to the basics can easily be read as the defensive move of a threatened leadership. The movement lost much of its strength after 1986: it had difficulty to define its role in a democratic country, there were internal contestations over power and many people simply lost interest in the revolution. Given the changes that had taken place in the NGOs and the women's movement respectively, it is also understandable why they were primary targets of the rectification. What remains a fascinating question, however, is why the rectification campaign was successful. Although many people and organizations in the National Democratic movement rejected the rectification, many went along with it. Following how the political rectification discourse became dominant among NGO actors sheds light on the interplay of discourse and power.

The question of how discourse becomes powerful is important (think of present day resurgent nationalist, ethnic and fundamentalist ideologies), and defies a simple answer. What happened in the Cordillera was so complex that I became convinced that power could not be reduced to a single principle. Instead, I contend that the renewed National Democratic discourse became dominant in the Cordillera through a combination of coercion, conviction and seduction. Let me elaborate this.

The fact that the rectification campaign was not accompanied by violence does not mean that there was no *coercion* involved. The 'Reaffirm...'-document was popularly said to have evoked a 'debate' in the National Democratic movement. In reality, this was not the case. The document put forward one 'truth' that could be accepted or rejected but was not up for debate. By leaving no space between 'correctness' on the one hand and 'error' on the other, a 'take it or leave it' situation was created. One either consented or left. Although many organizations and individuals took the exit option, the pressure to stay was considerable in those areas where the leadership had taken sides with the Reaffirmists.³² To understand this, one has to realize the nature of actors' commitment to the National Democratic movement. The movement was close to what Goffman calls a 'total institution' (1961). Membership represented many things at the same time. One operated in closely-knit groups, where work, leisure and family life were concentrated with the same people. Entering this movement often implied a virtual break with one's family and former friends, so comrades became colleagues, friends and relatives at the same time. The identification with the movement was reinforced by one's being engaged in partially underground work, underlining the distance from the 'rest of society'. One believed in the cause of the movement, and it was at the same time one's life project, embodying aspirations and career prospects. While a good record could result in a

higher position in the movement, it was hardly saleable in job hunts outside of it. In this situation, peer pressure and the prospect of having to leave the movement when opting out of the rectification provided a strong hold on people.

The rectification was also *convincing* to a large number of people. Subjects of ideology, ranging from capitalism to present-day fundamentalist movements, have often been associated with all kinds of varieties of 'false consciousness', where people are thought to internalize certain interpretations that have no 'objective' connection to their actual situation, needs and desires. However, as stipulated above, the arguments put forward by the 'Reaffirm...'-document were quite convincing. It was not difficult to find empirical evidence to corroborate the notion that essentially nothing had changed. NGO problems hinted at, were not invented by Jose Maria Sison, but resonated growing concerns of NGO management, both within and outside the movement (Constantino-David 1998). Once accepted, the ideas of the rectification became indeed a powerful ideology with a high "ability to intervene in the consciousness of those it subjects, appropriating and reinflecting their experience" (Eagleton 1991: 45). Increasingly, the interpretation of events and processes was filtered through this forceful prism. Sealed off from alternative readings and ideas that were *a priori* considered worthless when originating from somebody without the "right framework", the rectification discourse became an a-historic, 'naturalized' representation of social reality. What started as a convincing analysis thus turned into a discourse that increasingly shaped the reality.

The rectification discourse, finally, was also *seductive*. Actors were seduced by the rectification in two ways. In the first place, the rectification did not just present a coherent picture of social reality and errors in earlier strategies, it also provided a clear solution by 'going back to basics'. Emery Roe stated that in cases of high ambiguity and pressure to act, organizations tend to resort to broad explanatory narratives and standard approaches (Roe 1991).³³ The 'Reaffirm...'-document was just such a narrative on which to base organizational policy. The rectification was also seductive in a more symbolic way. The process of identifying and rectifying errors resembled the road to redemption of Catholic sinners. People had committed errors, had wandered from the right path, which was analysed and 'confessed' to in a rectification, after which they could resume with a clean slate, as if they were absolved from their errors/sins.³⁴ The willingness of people to undergo criticisms and self-criticisms, accompanied by intense emotional outbursts and a drive to make up for past errors, indicates that they attached a high symbolic value to the rectification.³⁵

The mechanisms that rendered the rectification discourse its power, i.e. coercion, conviction and seduction, worked in different combinations and with different weightings through time for different people. Actors did not simply enact the rectification discourse. They responded differently to the various pressures, accorded different meanings to the discourse and valorized it in varied ways. While for some the discourse represented absolute truth, others used it merely as a reference point. What one person embraced with dedication left his or her comrade largely indifferent. Where some felt the coercive properties of the rectification, others were challenged by opportunities to gain leadership. Some merely subjected themselves to the rectification, others explored the room for manoeuvre it provided.

Through this chapter I have shown how the rectification process in the National Democratic movement in the Philippines was partly affected by, and in turn strongly effected developments in NGOs and the women's movement. Due to its concentrated nature, the rectification process magnifies, to my mind, certain processes of constructing and working of discourse in relation to power processes. The range of responses shows that even a powerful ideological discourse does not operate outside of people's agency. Mediated by their agency and through their everyday practices, people evoke, empower, challenge and reshape discourses. At the same time it illustrates how discourse, once established, may be a forceful element in creating people's realities.

Notes

¹ Fieldnotes August 1995.

² This chapter only deals in detail with this group of National Democratic NGOs. There are many other kinds of NGOs in the Cordillera. A 1990 survey enumerates 60, most of which operate locally (Reyes-Boquiren et al. 1990). As in the wider Philippines, NGOs also differ in their political ideologies and affiliations. A small number of NGOs have a clear indigenous or environmentalist focus, many NGOs lean towards the government, and there are a number of NGOs set up by mining companies. For a comparative study on NGO interventions in open-pit mining communities, see Cariño 1992; 1990.

³ Interview with founding member of the NGO, August 1995.

⁴ In the preparation phase, the CECAP was referred to as CCDP: the Central Cordillera Development Plan. For the sake of clarity, I keep to CECAP, even when quoting from earlier documents that use CCDP.

⁵ This could amount to literally dozens of small projects in one village. For a village case study on CECAP, see Rovillos 1996.

⁶ This was the forerunner of the Consortium of development NGOs in the Cordillera.

⁷ By the end of 1994, a total of 3,192 micro-projects were ongoing or completed and a programme was approved for another five-year phase (CECAP 1992-1994). CECAP remained highly visible throughout the Cordillera with calendars, posters and other paraphernalia continuously flooding offices, shops and billboards with slogans such as 'CECAP- Providing Hope for the Long-term Future'. Some posters presented the communities 'before' and 'after' CECAP, and were not unlike adverts for cosmetics in women's weeklies (see map). Seeing these, one could not escape the impression that the programmes approach was more about CECAP-centred than people-centred development.

⁸ The life history of Amanda will follow in chapter 8.

⁹ The problem of NGOs having to redefine their identity after transformations in the state, for example, from military rule to democracy, has been widely documented, particularly for Latin America, see the volumes edited by Andrew Clayton 1996, and Michael Edwards and David Hulme 1992. For Central America see Biekart 1999, Borgh 1999, and Schlanger 1996 on

Brasil. The Peruvian case is interesting since NGOs face a double identity issue: in relation to the state and in relation to avoiding being associated with the Shining Path (Scurrah 1996)

¹⁰ For example, when a Plebiscite for Regional Autonomy was held (and turned down, see previous chapter), they now had to explain why they opposed the state, which involved a change of attitude towards the issue of regional autonomy for which CPA itself had lobbied.

¹¹ See Tigno 1993; Zialcita et al. 1995; CODE-NGO and DILG 1998; George 1998.

¹² For an authorized biography of Jose Maria Sison, see Sison and Werning 1989, for an unauthorized account of Sison and the revolutionary movement, see Jones 1989.

¹³ This is based on interviews with people involved in the project, in particular as of January 1996.

¹⁴ Fieldnotes, March 16 1996

¹⁵ Illustrative is the history of the new Governor of Benguet. In the 1995 elections this person had centred his campaign on the integrity of natural resources. His advocacy for self-determination of resources, as well as his family relations, - one of his brothers was the president of the CPA - led some NGOs and POs to make an exception to the general approach of staying away from elections, and they actively campaigned for him. However, soon after he resumed office, he changed position. Rumours had it that his gambling debts were so big that he was an easy prey to pressure from higher government officials. Whatever the truth, the fact was that he started to actively promote government projects, in particular the project of the San Roque dam. The betrayal of his campaign promises was but another sign that indeed "nothing had changed" and that official, electoral politics would never lead to substantial social change.

¹⁶ An additional axis, ranging from practical gender interests to strategic interests (Molyneux 1986, Moser 1993) or feminine versus feminist interests (Stephen 1997), which were subject to intense debate in Latin American women's movements, were never very prominent in the Philippines.

¹⁷ This complementarity is symbolized in the often-cited Philippine creation myth where 'Babaye' (woman) is considered to have emerged from the nodes of a bamboo as a whole person, separate from yet born together with Lalake (man) (Santiago 1995: 110).

¹⁸ For analytical clarity these factors are presented as separate. Although they sometimes appear as such, Philippine women organizations often taken into account (explicitly or implicitly) the notion that these forms of difference are not additive, but that the experiences of race or class alter the experience of gender (see Moore 1988). GABRIELA considered the articulation of forms of oppression by consistently raising the question of "how it is to be female and poor in a country dominated by foreign powers and interests" (Angeles 1989: 65-70).

¹⁹ For a comparative account of women's movements springing from revolutionary or liberation movements in El Salvador, see Stephen 1997.

²⁰ GABRIELA stands for General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action.

²¹ Gabriela General Secretary, quoted in Fumerton 1995: 64.

²² Fieldnotes March 1994.

²³ Fieldnotes March 1994.

²⁴ Apart from ideological stances, it has been suggested that "personalities, political manoeuvring and self-interest" were additional factors influencing women to take one side or the other (Fumerton 1995: 63).

²⁵ The strong messages of Philippine women activists aimed in part to counter the positive impression given by the Philippine government of its advanced gender policies.

²⁶ For instance, I attended one village-based evaluation of the Basic Women Orientation. It happened to be in a village where men felt justified 'disciplining' their wives, as they called it. The women declared that they no longer accepted this after they had received CWNGO's education. In a meeting they told several stories of how they had avoided this 'disciplining', one of them by escaping through the kitchen window. The men on the other hand, complained they had no means left to keep their women from talking all the time. One of them reported that he recently had to resort to throwing pottery because he could not discipline his wife any more. As he said "nobody is helped by the new situation, since now we have no pottery left in the household". This underscores the cultural diversity in the Cordillera, since such practices are apparently quite rare in the region.

²⁷ Fieldnotes March 1996.

²⁸ Quoted in Siapno 1995: 232.

²⁹ During my first visit to the Philippines in 1986, my hair was cut short. Several NGO women told me later during my stay that they initially thought I was a lesbian and had been afraid I might 'approach' them.

³⁰ Lesbian organizations are (like the other women organizations) engaged in discussions about their political affiliations or non-affiliations. They are also very much engaged in defining the meaning of Philippine lesbianism. One of the issues under discussion is gender roles of lesbian partners. It is relatively common among Philippine lesbians to make a strong distinction between the 'butches' and the 'femmes' in a lesbian couple. Some organizations only accept the 'butches' as members, because they consider 'femmes' lesbians, to be ordinary women.

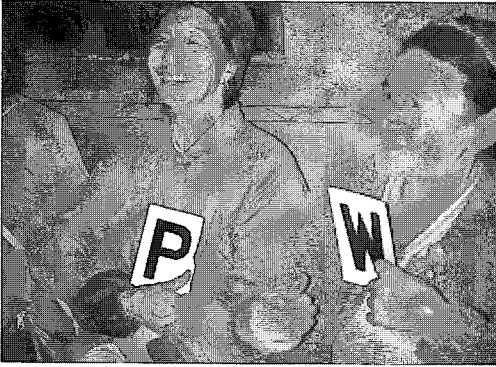
³¹ The class element here may be very significant. I am referring here to changes observed in women movement leaders. Although explicit talk about sexuality is considered shameful among middle-class women, it is, I believe, quite different among peasant women whose openness I have always found strikingly frank, including detailed comments about their husbands' performances in bed, quite contrary to the often cited demureness of Filipino women.

³² One reason why in the Cordillera the leadership did not divide over the debate was perhaps that the movement had already experienced a split in 1986 (see chapter 2).

³³ See also Hihhorst and van Leeuwen 2000.

³⁴ The comparison may not be taken literally when we take into account how Catholicism evolved in the Philippines. Philippine Catholicism has been characterized by a fascination for penance and the suffering of the passion, manifested among other things by the tradition of self-flagellation and even crucifixion practices during passion plays before Easter. As Nick Barker (1997) warned, this should not be interpreted as penitential exercise for committed sins, but as a 'contractual sacrifice' where self-flagellation is done to acquire the Grace of God and in exchange for protection of the family against mishaps and disease.

³⁵ Returning home from the women's oppression seminar mentioned above, one CWNGO staff member, for example, burst into tears because, as she said: "If I think back of all the erroneous things I have been teaching these women, how I poisoned their brains, my heart feels too heavy".



4

‘Progress’: Negotiating Development in a Village¹

At the base of this chapter lies a puzzling situation concerning a development intervention, too small and insignificant to ever attract the attention of serious evaluation. It is a literacy project for 13 women in Kayatuan, a village in Mountain Province. The story of the project can be told in a few lines. It was initiated by the Cordillera Women’s NGO (CWNGO) in order to empower illiterate women. The ability to read and write would help them in their everyday life, if only to guide transactions in the market or to travel to the big city. It would also empower the women politically, since being able to write would allow them to participate in elections. After training a volunteer, the local partner organization recruited a class of participants and the programme took off. Two years later the project concluded its first phase and a graduation party was held. Seventy guests, including a number of provincial government officials and the municipal mayor, attended the party.

As I saw it, there was only one problem with the project: it did not make sense. The participants were illiterate, but they were also very old. Most of them were teenagers during the Second World War and they were hardly capable of learning to read and write. They had to use thick markers to see the letters. With their arthritic fingers, it took them minutes to note down a word. Moreover they found it difficult to retain what they had learnt. Week after week the same letters were repeated, and on graduation day some could still not spell their first names. Perhaps it was understandable that the old women liked the literacy class. After all, it was lots of fun. But why did the officers of the women’s organization, especially the volunteer teacher, put so much time and effort into a training that was not going to make the participants literate? Why did they consider it important to organize such a major

event for the 'graduation'? If the purpose was not to teach the women, what did the project do? What happened to the envisaged empowerment of women?

I use the literacy project as an entry-point for examining the question of how development is shaped in a community. What can the literacy programme and other local development initiatives tell us about local actors' projects, the meaning of development, and social change in a village? These are important issues for understanding NGO interventions in their context.

Interface experts and the ensemble of development interventions

To elucidate these questions I developed a threefold approach: I studied the *ensemble* of development interventions by following village *interface experts*, while focusing on *local discourses* concerning development. This means that I looked at those dynamics in village organizing that normally remain invisible at the interface of NGO interventions, but can nonetheless explain a lot about what goes right, wrong and unexpected in development.

One reason why evaluation studies are perhaps unable to reveal these realities is because they normally look at development interventions in isolation. In contrast, I argue that the meaning of a project like the literacy training in Kayatuan cannot be grasped when the project is understood as an isolated encounter between two separate bodies: i.e. the NGO and the villagers. Instead, we should see how it is shaped in the context of the *ensemble* of development interventions at the local level. The way in which villagers perceive a particular project is informed by their experience with development, and they respond to programmes in relation to one another (Borgh 1999; Crewe and Harrison 1998: 155-75). The density of external development relations available to villagers can also be considered a decisive factor for the relative autonomy or room for manoeuvre of local organizations *vis-à-vis* intervening agencies (Esman and Uphoff 1984: 225; Frerks 1991: 167-73).

Hence, if we want to know how local villagers mobilize or respond to development interventions, we have to take into account the amalgam of external social relations and processes of enrolment taking place at the interfaces of development intervention. This is not as complex as it sounds. Development interventions do not pour down on a village like a rain shower; they are mediated by local development brokers (Sardan 1995; Mongbo 1995). Development enters Kayatuan through three social networks that are each embedded in community organizations. Core actors of these networks become local development specialists that represent the villagers *vis-à-vis* outside development agencies. In the process of accessing, allocating and implementing development activities, these actors become nodal points where knowledge about development is concentrated. That is why I call them *interface experts*. They speak the languages of the different intervenors and have a definite knowledge advantage over these outsiders.

Local development discourses

My interest in how development is shaped in a village and the symbolic meanings it acquires leads me to focus on the way in which local actors use different development discourses. Development interfaces are often presented as knowledge encounters where the expert knowledge of intervenors is juxtaposed with a body of local knowledge. In the case of indigenous peoples, the latter is sometimes called the 'indigenous worldview'. This picture of two opposing knowledge systems does not reflect the complex and often contradictory processes that order development at the local level and has to be refined in two major ways. First, it emerges that there are not two distinct and separate epistemologies. As shown by Pigg (1992) for the case of Nepal, local languages incorporate 'outside' notions such as development but redefine them in their local use (see also Arce and Long 1992; 2000). Second, we must acknowledge that neither of the two supposed bodies of knowledge, external or local, is homogeneous.

Kayatuan is the object of intervention by government development agencies, politically radical NGOs, election-minded politicians, a variety of religious groups and participation-loving academics. All of them have their own interests, approaches, languages and styles in promoting 'development' at the local level. Local discourses, on the other hand, are equally diverse. Even in a geographically compact locality such as this village, one cannot detect a single meaning of development. As I shall elaborate, people in Kayatuan use three different meanings of development that all combine fragments of discourses of modernity and tradition. These are development as 'modernising and improving the community', as 'helping those in need', and as 'bringing personal benefits'.

In this case study I follow how actors of a local women's organization use these three discourses and what that implies for development. I set out, then, to research how villagers through their responses to interventions and in interaction with each other accord meaning to development and how this reshapes power relations in the village. In this way I arrived at my interpretation of the literacy project. In the end, I found that the project, which was meant to empower the participants, contributed instead to erosion of the status of these women. Through the project they came to be defined as women who *lack* something, namely literacy. In everyday conversation they were literally referred to as the "no-read-no-write women". The officers of the organization, on the other hand, further established their position as *bearers* of development. Before introducing the key actors and elaborating on how literacy training became one of the constitutive elements of social change in Kayatuan, let me introduce the village and bring out some of the more salient contradictions in local development discourses.

The village of Kayatuan

Kayatuan is a *barangay* in Mountain Province. A *barangay* is an administrative unit under a municipality, which is governed by an elected captain and council. It is situated along the Halsema 'Highway', a two-track road only partly cemented and mainly consisting of rough and bumpy stretches, at a five to ten hour drive from Baguio City. According to a 1994 survey, there are 744 inhabitants in Kayatuan divided over 152 households. Three features of Kayatuan stand out as particularly relevant for the issues discussed here: migration patterns, the changing nature and composition of labour, and the presence of 'contractors' in the village.

Due to a rather narrow resource base in the area and a growing population throughout this century, out-migration has been a central feature of the area. Before the Second World War, men sought seasonal work in the forest or mines, coming back after some months. After the war, whole families often moved either to join the fathers at their workplace or to start agriculture in the lowlands. Although many moved out on a permanent basis, most practised a variety of temporary forms of migration, leaving and returning to the village - hence the local term used for these people as the 'come-'n-goes'. There was also in-migration from nearby villages, for example, of families who wanted to live near the school that was built in Kayatuan in 1956. In the 1980s, international labour migration became another possibility. At the time of fieldwork, 27 people out of the 152 households in Kayatuan were working abroad. Of these, 23 were women: daughters or wives doing domestic work in 'Saudi'² or Hong Kong. Migration, then, is firmly engrained in Kayatuan life. Even children, one as young as six years old, resort to migration with or without the permission of their parents.³

Another feature has been a rapid move away from subsistence agriculture. Merely two decades ago, practically everybody's main activity was subsistence agriculture. Today this only holds true for 40% of the adults. Of these 40%, most combine subsistence rice and camote growing with commercial vegetable farming. Another 40% have paid employment (including working abroad) or are engaged in shop-keeping, trading or other kinds of business. Quite a few are professionals in the government bureaucracy or work as teachers. The remainder are comprised of students or parents taking care of their children. This development has different implications for social relations in the village. Gender roles have been affected. Previously, men were considered the 'providers' of the family since they could generate income through road, forest or mine work during agricultural low seasons. Today, increasingly, women have the paid jobs. There is more overseas employment for women and more women work as teachers or have administrative jobs. Few men are professionals; those with employment are usually drivers. This development has shaken local gender ideology. Remarks like "today, women are the *providers*" have become commonplace in the village.⁴

Moreover, it has resulted in a widening gap between professionals and peasant women in the village. Merely one generation ago, the ideal woman in communities

like Kayatuan was to be strong and a hard working peasant. This has increasingly given way to aspirations of and for women to become educated professionals. It has profoundly changed the ideal image of women, symbolized by a changing idea of beauty. Whereas before, a beautiful woman was in the first place sturdy and strong, this has given way to an ideal type of a slim woman with a pale skin (McKay 1993). This increasing differentiation among women, and the loss of status of peasant women in particular, reflects power processes at the intersection of the wider society and the community. As I shall argue, it partly results from local practices of development, such as the literacy programme.

A third particularity of this village is the group of 'contractors'. There are four men and a woman who make their living in infrastructural work contracted out by the government. It is common knowledge that these contracts are lucrative opportunities, generating incomes for the contractors that sometimes amount to as much as 80% of the entire sum involved. The reason why these people are successful in landing contracts of this kind is due to their proximity to the provincial governor to whom they are linked through kinship and/or a history of work relations. The complex practices surrounding contracts are intimately related to the organization of government finances and the way in which Philippine bureaucracy operates (see Coronel 1998). Getting contracts is, among other things, subject to the condition that the application should be filed by a community organization. In order to facilitate this, the contractors are officers of civic organizations, such as the Parent Teacher Association. As we shall see, this has particular repercussions for how local people perceive development.

Meanings of development in Kayatuan

People in Kayatuan have different ideas about development. These are not clear-cut discourses that are used as such in village conversations. Embedded in the everyday practices and conversations of villagers are fragments of discourses. They hint at different and sometimes contradictory ways in which people approach development. In order to arrive at an understanding of these differences, I started to analyze how villagers use, in word and deed, the concepts of 'progress', 'project', and 'community organization'. On the basis of these analyses, I arrived at composite definitions of the different meanings of development in Kayatuan. These are development as 'modernizing and improving the community', development as 'helping those in need', and development as 'bringing personal benefits'.

Progress in Kayatuan

A first meaning of progress found in Kayatuan is related to being adventurous and daring to take opportunities. It is related to the pride Kayatuans take in their history of migration in the area. As somebody said: "We are the *Vikings* of the Cordillera". Migration is associated with an exploratory attitude and an inclination towards

'progress'. For example, when a group of migrants from Kayatuan ran into conflicts with local Kalinga residents where they had settled, they derided the Kalingans as "not liking progress".

Villagers also use the term progress to refer to material advancement. Somebody would remark, for example: "There is no progress in Kayatuan, only in Baguio. Here, only the contractors have progress". A third meaning of progress is related to becoming modern. It refers to modernizing the village by obtaining electricity, water systems, and cemented pathways, but also by adopting modern values. This is particularly salient in relation to the importance attached to cleanliness.

Painfully aware of their origins among the 'headhunting tribes' of the Igorots, and even more of certain traditional practices now considered 'dirty', many Kayatuans go to great lengths to convince themselves and outsiders that they have broken with their past.⁵ On numerous occasions, quite different people told the same story to introduce Kayatuan to me, namely:

"If you had come here earlier, you could not walk without stepping in the dung of the pigs that were roaming around freely. Then, if you had to go to the toilet, you had to sit with the pigs".

It happened on several occasions when people were asked about former times that they said: "Oh, you mean when we were still dirty", or, alternatively, "Oh, when we were still ignorant...". This was not during conversations about cleanliness or education but about agriculture and land use one generation ago. They used these remarks apparently as a time marker, a general reference to the 'old days'. Their equating the old days with 'dirty times' stems no doubt from decades of missionary teaching during colonial days, followed by American efforts to educate Filipinos that "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" as can still be read in today's classrooms in the village school.⁶

On the other hand, people take pride in their origins as Igorots. In their civic organizations, extensive use is made of traditional symbols. They often reiterate particular values attributed to kinship and community solidarity, while ignoring other sides of their cultural heritage, such as head hunting practices.⁷ Barth (1969) laid the groundwork in identifying ethnicity as a form of social organization, with the ethnic boundary as a critical focus for investigation. If ethnicity is constructed by drawing boundaries, one might say that in Kayatuan people recreate their ethnicity by drawing a boundary around their past. Both literally and in a symbolic sense, Kayatuans seem eager to 'clean' their past. They are still Igorots, but adhere to modern standards of hygiene and selectively celebrate what they consider the 'proper' elements of their traditions. This process is illustrated by the present day use of traditional dress. At organizational activities women don traditionally woven garments. These, however, are bright, new and neat skirts. Although they are of the same fabric as the torn, dirty, earth-stained skirts wrapped around the old women in the fields, the former are a symbol of today's Igorots, while the latter are looked upon with derision. Wearing traditional dress during these occasions is reminiscent of Igorot traditions, while at the same time it underlines the distance people from Kayatuan have travelled from their past.

Projects in Kayatuan

A second concept from which the local meanings of development can be derived is from projects. People perceive of projects in three different ways: as community improvement, as instruments of welfare services, and as a means of personal enrichment. Firstly, a sense of civic duty related to government rhetoric bestows upon women the responsibility to work on projects for the community. This is particularly felt by those women who work for the government or who are married to local politicians. Secondly, projects are associated with helping people in need. This has continuity with kinship obligations and redistributive social institutions that have ordered social community life from time immemorial. Rituals and other redistributive mechanisms continue to play a role today (see Lewis 1992), and kinship ties in particular remain central. People continuously refer to others in terms of their kinship relations, up to the third degree. A couple belongs to the clans of both parents of both spouses, and due to this bilateral kinship system, family ties have become diffused throughout the community. This results in strong notions that people have of helping each other when they are in need, since they are all family. This value is reinforced through the churches that are very active in the community. Thus projects that are meant to benefit the '*indigent*' people, or as they are referred to in the local vernacular the '*kakaasi*' (literally 'the pitiful'), often have a double ring of kin solidarity and Christian charity about them.

A quite different meaning attached to projects is as venues for personal enrichment. This is clearly related to the practice of 'contracts' explained above. In the cases of tendered contracts, projects are often not primarily formulated for the development they bring, but rather for the development prospects they contain. The most pressing issue in formulating these projects is not about needs, goals and beneficiaries, but about the question of who is going to be the contractor. The desired outcome of projects as 'bringing development' becomes secondary at most, and sometimes, outcomes are not even part of the deal at all. Illustrative is the situation in lower Kayatuan where around 70 households share one single water faucet. No less than four projects were initiated to construct water tanks to improve the situation, they all failed. One tank was constructed, but taken into use by the contractor as his personal fish pond. Another tank was empty, since the contractor had removed the pipes upon completion of the project inspection. One tank was never built and a final one never completed.

Community organizations in Kayatuan

The final concept I wish to discuss is community organization. There are around 30 community organizations in Kayatuan, some dormant but many active ones. A large number of these have been formed at the instigation of outside institutions, such as government departments, churches, and politicians. There are also independent organizations, like a co-operative and a Ladies' Association (to which most of this chapter is devoted). Because of the proliferation of organizations, most people have multiple memberships and there is often overlap in the sets of officers. The

organizations are important in the life world of Kayatuan residents. Partly they are interwoven with kin-ties, since organizations become immersed in extended family relations. The many organizations and officer titles seem to be an extension of clans and relatives. As easily as people refer to each other in terms of kinship, they may use their organizational affiliations and positions. When two Kayatuan people meet on the road, it is as likely that they will address each other as "Good day, cousin", as "Good day, councillor". On the other hand, the organizations also help in ordering social relations in the village. Because of the proliferation of kinship in multiple directions, kinship is not a very effective way of discriminating relationships. Associational affiliations help to give additional meaning to social relationships in terms of which are important and which of less significance.

Like for progress and project, there are several meanings attached to these organizations. A first meaning is related to the community itself. It relates to a sense of togetherness and belongingness in the community as well as a certain competition with other communities, reminiscent of former village rivalry. People are proud to have an active community and always seek occasions to show off their village or to enter contests and competitions in which many have won awards. When a baby from the village wins the provincial 'Healthiest Baby Competition', this fills people with pride, and a sense of 'we' won.

Organizations are, secondly, associated with community politics. Officers can use the organizations to expand their influence over community affairs and projects. Government employees are not entitled, according to Philippine law, to run for political positions. Participation in the Barangay Council, the local government body, is thus not possible for government employees. Government employees who nonetheless want to be involved in community affairs, find occasion through the community organizations to promote all kinds of government programmes and policies⁸. Those people who are not government employees, on the other hand, can use these organizations as a springboard for election to political office.

Organizations, as described above, can also be used to acquire a contract for a government infrastructure project, a substantial source of enrichment for the contractor. Although the contractors explain their own involvement in community organizations as an expression of civic responsibility, it is common knowledge in the community that this serves them well. When a teenage girl sighed she wanted to become rich, and I asked her how she could, she immediately giggled "Then I have to become the president of the PTA (Parent Teacher Association)".

Finally, organizations are identified with community solidarity and mutual support. They place high emphasis on co-operation and on helping those members of the community in any kind of need. These needs can be material, for example, when the community gets together to construct a house for a young couple who want to live in Kayatuan. But they can also be formulated for others, in the sphere of education and values, such as when an organization officer explained: "These poor women are not even aware of the need for cleanliness, and we have to educate them".

Three meanings of development

From the different meanings accorded to progress, projects and community organizations, the three meanings of development mentioned can be derived - development as 'modernizing and improving the community', development as 'helping those in need', and development as 'getting personal benefits'. As can be seen from the table below, all three draw on discourses from within the village as well as on discourses introduced by intervening agencies. The meaning of community improvement is associated with kinship and tradition in the village, but also with public administration and (in a different version) NGOs. The solidarity language is based on values of redistribution and reciprocity, and is more closely associated with church initiatives. Development as personal benefit reflects the entrepreneurial and adventurous character of villagers who migrate, and fits well with the practices of certain government line agencies.

One must recognize that the different notions that make up the local development dictionary are not static. The next section focuses on how they are used in everyday practices. I will first introduce the Kayatuan Ladies' Association and present a description of the graduation party of the literacy class. The graduation will be analyzed after introducing the actors in the core group of the Ladies Association in order to demonstrate the manner in which these women manage relations with sponsoring organizations. After this, I will focus on the kinds of conflict that have emerged in the organization, in order to highlight how development notions are used to categorize and label village women and to pattern social distance between them.

Multiple meanings of development

Meanings of 'progress'	Meanings of 'project'	Meanings of 'community organization'	
'Cleanliness'	'Community improvement and beautification'	'Belongingness and village pride'	} Development as 'improving the village'
'Modernization' (infrastructure)		'A means to regulate smooth social relations'	
		'Channel for promoting government policies'	
		'Expression of civic duty'	
	'Instruments to help indigent people or the <i>kakaasi</i> (pitiful)'	'Extension of kinship solidarity'	} Development as 'helping those in need'
	'Welfare services'	'Expression of mutual support, Christian duty'	
'Adventurous, daring to take opportunities'	'A means for personal enrichment'	'A means to gain political power'	} Development as 'bringing personal benefits'
'Material advancement'		'A means to acquire lucrative government contracts'	

The Kayatuan Ladies' Association, Incorporated

The Kayatuan Ladies' Association Incorporated or KLAi was founded in July 1989 by some of the village women. There were already several women's organizations in the community and the reason to form yet another was explained as follows:

"We observed the need to get the women together to talk about our problems, to improve our situation, to help one another and to solve our problems. That is why we wanted to have a Non Government Organization".⁹

From the beginning of the process of organizing, it was thus clear that this organization was not just a women's club, but an NGO, a concept associated with projects and external fund raising. Note, for example, the way the organization's name is written, with the 'i' for 'incorporated' always added to the acronym. The 'i' signals that the organization is registered as an NGO with the Security Exchange Committee. This registration was done even before the first membership meeting. Hence, the consistent use of the 'i' stands out as a symbol underscoring the NGO-ness of the organization.

The KLAi started with 30 members, and later grew to a membership of 70. The initial members were mainly mobilized from a government-related network of *Barangay* Health Workers that functioned in the community. Immediately after the organization was formally established, the search for projects started. Besides project work, KLAi developed numerous other activities, through thick interrelations with other community organizations as well as a number of government agencies.

The way KLAi obtained projects was by mobilizing existing contacts outside of the community to approach 'sponsors', and then to apply for whatever a particular sponsor had to offer. The contacts that could be tapped for this purpose were both social (for instance with people originating from the area) and those established in the course of earlier development interventions. This was the case, for example, with a number of academics who have done work before in the area and were now approached to arrange funding for the women's organization. The officers of KLAi were apparently very skilful in this game and before long projects started to come in. These included two different swine distribution and fattening programmes, a village pharmacy, and two cash prizes¹⁰ used for the construction of an organization office and the purchase of musical instruments for the village youth.

The projects were managed by the KLAi and sponsored by different kinds of agencies. They had activities with the Ministry of Health and several other line agencies, with a bilateral development programme, and with the Dutch Embassy. All in all these formed an impressive network. Among the contacts of KLAi were also two NGOs. Both belonged to the radical NGO Consortium introduced in the previous chapter. One of these, CWNGO, was responsible for introducing the adult literacy programme in the community. The NGOs stood out in the KLAi network. By entering into relations with them, KLAi treaded a delicate path. The relation between the NGO Consortium and politicians of Mountain Province was very antagonistic.

The NGOs kept a critical eye on the practices of politicians (e.g. corruption), while the politicians firmly believed that the NGOs belonged to an underground communist movement. Despite explicit warnings and even threats from the politicians (in particular the wife of the provincial Congressman) to abstain from these contacts, KLAi nonetheless pursued its relations with the NGOs and got away with it, largely by a tactic of feigning ignorance. In this way the KLAi was in fact able to set its own standards for deciding which actors will be involved in local development.

The core group of KLAi was well aware of the value of contacts to obtain projects. They were careful not to jeopardize their good relations. At one point, for example, the organization faced a contractual obligation to refund credit they had received from one of the government line agencies. Although there were no sanctions if it was not repaid, the officers of KLAi insisted on paying exactly on time. First they pressed members to pay their dues, and then borrowed the money outstanding, from the co-operative store. This was easy, since the set of officers of the two organizations largely overlapped. In this way, they were able to pay back the loan. When one of the officers explained to KLAi members why they had to pay, she said:

“There is a rule. Once you are a good payer, they will give you a higher amount next time. If we now pay back the 100,000, next time we will maybe get 500,000”.¹¹

For the officers of the KLAi, paying back the loan was not a final step in a project that was to be completed. It was assumed that paying back the loan, rather than terminating relations with the agency, would actually increase their chances to strengthen the relation and opt for bigger projects in the future. One of the strategies officers employed to secure new projects was thus to maintain a good record of implementation. As the graduation party shows, these women apply many strategies in order to maintain good relations with people they may need for future projects.

The graduation party, as explained in the introduction to this chapter, followed two years of patiently teaching ‘no-read-no-write women’ the skill of writing. The project started because officers of the KLAi had heard that CWNGO offered possibilities for a literacy project. They found this a good idea and Manang Juliet, the founder of the organization, mobilized a class of participants. Later, asked about their motivation to join, most of the participants explained they were “told to do so by the midwife”. As the project evolved, it became a kind of social venue for these old women. There was one exception, a woman in her fifties who was eager to learn how to write in order to be able to correspond with her children working overseas. This person complained that there was so little progress in the class.

The way the project developed was a far cry from the objectives given by the supporting NGO and the teacher. Nonetheless, this big party was organized for the women to celebrate their graduation. As the ethnography will make clear, the literacy class attained meaning in relation to wider organizational processes, never envisaged by any of the actors involved. The class fitted the particular dynamics of KLAi, and became one of the episodes through which development notions were played out, shaping perceptions and altering power relations in the village.

The literacy graduation party

It is December 8, 1995, a day long anticipated in Kayatuan. Today is the graduation of the non-formal education group after literacy training for the 'no-read-no-write women'. After two years of twice-weekly training, the women finish the equivalent of 'grade one' of the elementary school system. The day before the graduation, five officers of the KLAi gather to prepare for the festivity. They first decorate the school building where the event is to take place, putting up a huge backcloth made of a white sheet with big red letters to announce the occasion. They also type out several copies of the programme for the event. The remainder of the day, until well beyond midnight, they spend cooking. All the graduating women contribute some vegetables and a prescribed amount of rice, equivalent to the volume of two sardine cans, and money is collected to purchase meat. The preparations are carried out smoothly. The women obviously have been through these routines before.

The graduation takes place in the morning. Around seventy people are cramped into a classroom and numerous children play around. Then, at a sign from the *barangay* captain, all rise to share a prayer and sing the national anthem. Most of the audience consists of women, all dressed in the uniform of the organization: a traditional wrap-around skirt with a blue tee-shirt with the name of the KLAi printed on it. All officers of the *barangay* council of Kayatuan are present. And a large number of representatives of the government and of non-government organizations have travelled to the village to join in the celebration, including the municipal mayor. Ironically, only CWNGO, which initiated the literacy class, was unable to send staff to the celebration.

The official guests are treated with great reverence. The mayor is frequently referred to in the welcome address and throughout all the speeches. He is consistently called 'Apo mayor', a form of address which is normally reserved for 'Apo Dios', God. Another high official among the guests is the District Supervisor of the Department of Education and Sport. During the welcome address, the speaker makes a deliberate mistake by referring to him as the Superintendent, one rank higher than his present position. To the delight of the audience, she corrects herself and says: "No, the Supervisor, Superintendent to be". Other speakers follow her example and before the morning is finished the 'mistake' will be repeated three more times.

After the welcoming address, the graduating women present themselves. They walk to the front of the classroom, some of them use a cane or are bent double. With one or two exceptions, they were born before the Second World War and are grandmothers and even great-grandmothers. They start with a demonstration of their skills and write down their names on a blackboard. It takes some of them more than five minutes, and several have to erase the name repeatedly before getting it right. Finally, the entire list is there. They form a colourful line in front of the classroom. One of them speaks on behalf of the group and giggles: "We are the *balasang di kalman*, the girls of yesteryear". This self-imposed label sets the tone for the entire morning. When the District Supervisor distributes the diplomas, he takes the joke further and addresses the women as *ading*, the address used for younger

siblings. Considering his age he could easily pass for one of their sons, so each time he uses *ading*, the audience roars with laughter. Before the distribution of the diplomas, however, the graduates have prepared a little programme. Some of them present a skit that centres around their newly achieved capacity to read the place of destination on public transport vehicles, and one of the women recites a nursery rhyme in the national language (*Tagalog*), entitled "I love my dog".

Although the presentation of the graduates is well received and enjoyable, one of the officers of the KLAi will later confide that she had been annoyed. Apparently, the women had forgotten to bring forward their well rehearsed plea to receive more monetary support from the municipal government for the literacy class and, in particular, remuneration for the volunteer teacher. In the eyes of the officer, this is a lost chance after all their efforts to entice the government officials to be present at the celebration. She is especially concerned since the teacher volunteer is her sister, and she has for some time now put a lot of effort into lobbying for remuneration.

When all the 'distinguished guests' have finished their congratulation speeches, it is finally the turn of the mayor to take the floor. He starts by thanking everybody for "helping the young ladies" [i.e. the graduates]. He then addresses the women and says:

"I am very happy that you went to school. Even if you didn't know how to take a bath before, now that you have come to the school, you know how to take a bath, how to wash your clothes and how to clean your house".

The graduating grandmothers continue to look up at him, smiling and beaming. None of them protests or seems the least bit upset by the suggestion that until last year they did not know how to keep themselves or their houses clean. The mayor thus continues undisturbed and starts to address the entire community, reiterating a number of municipal policies. He reminds them to go to the mountains and plant trees, to stop using cyanide and electric current in the river to catch fish, and to stop burning trees on the mountain slopes. Everybody should help his neighbours and to maintain unity in the village. Finally and most importantly: "people should stop the widespread vices of gambling and drinking!"

Then the graduation is over. While the women gather up the lunch utensils, the *barangay* officers and the government representatives quickly disappear. They assemble in the house of the *barangay captain*, where several bottles of *ginebra* (gin) stand waiting with plates of *pulutan* (a popular appetizer made of intestines fried in blood). The solemn caution of ten minutes earlier is apparently not meant for the officials themselves, and with pleasure the mayor is the first to start the heavy drinking session. In the meantime, the women and children enjoy their lunch in the school building. Afterwards, they put on a tape with *gangsa* music (brass gongs) and start to perform traditional dances. A session for picture taking finally concludes the graduation programme and everybody returns home. The five officers of the KLAi, who prepared the graduation the night before, walk together to the house of one of them. They have to discuss a request from a member of the organization who wants to borrow money in order to finance her daughter's placement in overseas

employment. After all is arranged, the women continue talking about their future plans with their co-operative. They seem happy that the graduation is successfully finished, but there always remains more to be done.

The core group of the KLAi

Before analyzing the graduation, let me introduce the core group of the KLAi. KLAi has a full complement of officers, including a number of officers without tasks, like the *Public Relation Officer* and the *Sergeant-at-Arms*. However, not all officers are active, and in fact the organization is run by a core group of six people. The central figure is a woman named *Manang Juliet*. Originally from the lowlands, she came to the area in 1956 to assume a position as midwife. She is the widow of a former headmaster of the high school, with six adult children. Midwives don't easily come to mind as powerful people but *Manang Juliet* is one of the most respected authorities in the community. Conditions in the area are harsh and every baby well delivered is a major accomplishment, creating life-long obligations (the so-called *utang na loob*) with the person who has assisted in the delivery.

Over the years, *Manang Juliet* built a successful career, to the point of becoming co-ordinator of all midwives and Rural Health Units in the province. She also became increasingly involved in "volunteerism", as she calls it, and initiated many organizations and projects, usually with a health angle to them. *Manang Juliet* is the founder of KLAi. She has many contacts in the Provincial Capital that she can mobilize and she played a pivotal role in recruiting and consolidating the membership of the organization, using her leverage and social influence as a midwife, and the wife of the high school principal. She is the unquestioned authority of the core group.

Two other members of the core group are teachers: Mrs. Dulay and Mrs. Barlig. Both originate from Kayatuan. Mrs. Dulay is married to the vice-mayor. She is in her fifties and appears to be the second-in-command of the KLAi. She takes community affairs very seriously and cannot sleep knowing that work is left undone. She often utters generalized complaints about people, such as:

"You have to remind them all the time. Unless somebody reminds them or tells them what to do, they will not do it. Then they just want to do their own things. Like before, when we had no organization and they just sat with their neighbors and made *chica-chica* [small talk]."

Mrs. Dulay resents every instance of politics entering community organizations. She prays every night that her husband, the vice-mayor, will "stay clean" as she calls it. Mrs. Barlig is younger and is often tasked to keep records or do the bookkeeping. She is very energetic, and enjoys a good laugh. She often reiterates how she owes her job in the school to the late husband of *Manang Juliet*.

Adriana Lapadan belongs to one of the old families of Kayatuan and has kinship relations in different degree with most Kayatuan residents. She is the wife of the *barangay* captain. She is also the largest vegetable trader in the community. Her active involvement in the KLAi partly coincides with her interest as a trader, since she has

business relations with most members and often uses meetings to make arrangements. On the other hand, her dedication to organizing matters goes far beyond this practical interest. She visibly enjoys applying her skills and learning new ones to be able to handle projects.

Finally, there are two women I came to consider as belonging to the core group, although they were not officers of the KLAi. Gloria Langiden is one of them and the only 'housewife' of the village. She lives on the allowance sent by her husband who works in the mines. She makes it a habit to hang around when the KLAi officers meet to discuss organizational matters. Delia Bokod is the sister of Mrs. Dulay. She farms, without much support from her husband, who is known as the 'drunken master' of the village. Whenever her work allows, she joins the core group's formal and informal gatherings. She and Gloria often have things to discuss with the officers because they are representatives on the *barangay* council. As non-professionals, they have been able to run for political office, which they did with the support of the KLAi. Together with Adriana Lapadan, who attends most council meetings to assist her husband, they actively promote issues in the *barangay*. For example, they secured a monthly stipend for the voluntary work of the *Barangay* Health Workers.

The core group, then, is a closely-knit group, with longstanding friendship and kinship relations. Most of them have multiple positions as officers in other community organizations. They also have close associations with people in local politics and government. *Manang* Juliet, Mrs. Dulay and Mrs. Barlig are professionals in government service and through both marriage and activities, are linked to the political structures of the village and the province. Adriana Lapadan has high standing in the locality because of her marriage to the *barangay* captain. The two remaining women figure in elected local government positions.

Managing the interfaces of development

Through their organizational experience and strategic position in the *barangay* and *vis-à-vis* government structures, the core group members have become highly skilled 'development interface experts'. They have the knowledge and the skills to organize development and manage relations with outside convenors of development. The graduation event clearly displays this. The ease with which they provide a meal for more than 70 people, the invitations, decorations and ceremonial composition of the programme all bear witness to their skills. The same holds true for the way they manage relations with government representatives.

The graduation is meant as a celebration for the literacy class participants, but they are certainly not the central actors. It seems that the main purpose of the event is the occasion to invite government representatives to the *barangay* to strengthen ties with them and enrol them for future support. The women know how to do this. They pay ample respect to them in their speeches, and go to great lengths to flatter them, for example in the deliberate mistake of addressing a representative by a rank higher than his actual position. The fact that the flattery is obvious enough to invite laughter apparently does not diminish its effect. They are well aware that the government officials like to have their lunch separately and preferably added to a drinking

session. Through a smooth collaboration of the Lapadan couple, Adriana remains in charge of the lunch at the graduation site, while her husband entertains the officials, no doubt using the occasion to discuss some projects with them.

The KLAi officers are thoroughly familiar with the different practices of development. They master the idiom of community development and projects for the poor (in this case the old women), and are equally familiar with practices that require treating officials well in order to be rewarded with a project. They know everything about the official aspects of projects, such as writing proposals, bookkeeping and recording. But they also know that development has a social component and needs constant enrolment and investing in relations with those in a position to give development. *Manang* Juliet and Adriana Lapadan consistently 'work' on these relations. They both go to Bontoc several times a week, where they make sure they drop by some of the offices to talk about projects.

By using their knowledge, the KLAi officers not only mobilize development but also bend it to a considerable extent. In the case of the literacy training, for example, they managed to change sponsors without much ado. The project was originally sponsored by the CWNGO. After two years, the KLAi wanted to have the activity adopted by a government agency that could possibly remunerate the volunteer teacher. When the NGO was not able to send a staff member to the graduation activity, the women took the opportunity to ignore the NGO involvement altogether. The NGO was completely left out of the picture. Not once during the celebration was their support mentioned, instead the government representatives were requested to "*continue (sic) their support*".

Manipulation of projects therefore seems a normal aspect of development in Kayatuan. KLAi has developed a clear style of 'shopping around' for projects by investigating what kind of projects an organization has to offer and write a proposal accordingly. That doesn't mean that in practice the project will follow the proposal. But one of the reasons why this may happen is that they are more knowledgeable about the intervening agencies than the representatives of these agencies are about local dynamics. While seemingly playing along with the rules of these institutions, they are very well able to implement their own 'projects'.

The KLAi officers use different development concepts to manage relations with intervening agencies and appropriate development for their own projects. They do this deliberately; in interviews they explain what they do and why this is important. In a much less clear-cut way, development concepts are also used to negotiate social order in Kayatuan. People often talk about the social changes that have occurred in the village, but how this happens remains largely unnoticed by the local actors. They may not realize what role they play in these social changes. Yet, they have a role and one way in which they play it is by negotiating development through applying different discourses. One way of making these processes visible, I contend, is by following actors in their everyday practices. Especially when one focuses on moments of conflict, as I will do in the next section, ongoing negotiations of the social order become apparent.

Dynamics within the KLAi

When members of the KLAi are asked during interviews why they are not officers of the organization, they usually reply: "Because I don't speak English". It is a tacit understanding that being a KLAi officer requires knowing English, at least if one wants to be part of the core group. Consider this statement of one of the officers when she speaks of the conception of the KLAi:

"At the start we were with Mrs. Peñaranda, Mrs. Barlig, Mrs. Vergara and Joanna Bagaba. Joanna was there, although she hardly understands English, but she was always willing to sit with us."

Thus the participation in the initial core group of a non-English speaker needed explanation. The quote also shows the separate status of Joanna Bagaba. She is not included in the "us" referred to and her participation is defined in a passive sense. She is moreover the only one called by her Christian name, although she is one of the eldest of this group. Joanna is a housewife and farmer, the others mentioned are professionals.

Roles and conflicts of professionals

The professionals are keener than others to be officers and competition over the control of the organization easily arises. At the start of KLAi, for example, a conflict occurred between the core group and Mrs. Balatas. Mrs. Balatas is a government employee and married to one of the contractors in the village. Although she had been active in setting up earlier women's organizations in Kayatuan, she was not invited to the founding meeting of the KLAi. The core group maintains this was just a mistake, but she believes, probably correctly, that this was a way of excluding her from taking a position in the new organization. She refuses to be a member and viciously gossips about the organization. It is only when she is given the Presidency of yet another new women's organization in the village, for spouses of government officials, that the conflict subsides.

Apparently, then, it is considered rewarding to be an officer. Without denying the genuine desire of these officers to help their fellow villagers, or the obvious pleasure they have in organizing and the social interaction that accompanies the work, it seems there are other motives for becoming an officer. One possible motive could be that the position offers opportunities for material reward. When the first consignment of money arrived for one of the swine-fattening programmes, the core group retained 20% and distributed this among themselves to "cover their expenses". The incident fits into the multi-faceted conception of development in the village. In a mild version of contracting practices, the core group claimed they "deserved a reward" for bringing the project to the village. Other members apparently did not agree and six of them resigned from the KLAi. Being Jehovah Witnesses, they officially explained their withdrawal on religious grounds but everybody assumed their resignation was related to the incident.

More important than the material rewards, I believe, is the question of status and, in particular, a need to be different from the ordinary members of the KLAi. In some ways, professionals are not very distinct from other people in the village. Their houses do not stand out (expensive houses in the village belong to either the contractors, or to families with several children working overseas), they are embedded in extensive family relations in the village, and to some degree they are all involved in agriculture. Mrs. Dulay can be seen every day collecting *camote* (sweet potatoes) for her pigs, Mrs. Barlig often works in the fields and so do the children of *Manang* Juliet. But in other respects they are different from other women, a difference they enjoy. This becomes apparent through a conflict with a teacher who is not an officer but a member of the KLAi. This particular lady had the bad luck to have the piglet handed out to her, die in her care. She was convinced that the animal was sick when she received it, but the core group held her responsible and demanded she pay back her loan. In the end a compromise was reached, but the teacher remained spiteful. When she spoke about the incident several years after it happened, she broke into tears. Her grief, as it turned out, was not about the loan that she had to pay back but about the way she had been treated, namely as one of the ordinary people of the village. In particular, her case had been publicly discussed in front of the entire membership. As she explained:

“When I see her [*Manang* Juliet], I still smile. But she should not have talked in front of other people. If only she had done it individually but not in the meeting. She is the midwife, and I am the teacher. And then she speaks to me in front of the common *tao* [the common people]. That is why it really hurts.”¹²

For this teacher, it was a major insult and humiliation to be addressed in front of (and therefore as if she is one of) the common people. The professional, in other words, although she does not have a position as one of the officers, does not want to be treated as just a member. After the incident she felt it her duty to retain her membership of the KLAi but when the core group of KLAi became active in setting up a local chapter of the nation-wide Catholic Women’s League, she refused to become a member of this new organization.¹³

In the project proposals and in the eyes of the sponsors, the KLAi consists of a group of undifferentiated beneficiaries. In practice, however, this is not the case. The KLAi core group receive the same benefits as other members but with a different rationale. For example, they are among the first to receive a pig as part of the swine-fattening programme. During a discussion on the selection of beneficiaries, one of them explains:

“We look at the members who need it. But of course, we also have a pig ourselves. Why should we not also have a pig? We are even the ones who bring the project to the community.”

In everyday practice a differentiation is made among the participants of the project. Ordinary members obtain a pig because they are *in need*, but the core group receives a pig *as a reward* for their efforts. Different fragments of development

discourses are simultaneously applied, to different kinds of participants. By doing so, a distinction is created between those people who receive development (the ordinary beneficiaries) and those who bring development (the core group). This difference contributes considerably to the desired '*status aparte*' of the professionals in the community. How the distinction works out for those considered the beneficiaries will be explored in the case of *Manang* Esmeralda.

Peasant women as beneficiaries

Manang Esmeralda came to Kayatuan as a girl, and became a housemaid for one of the teachers. She then married a local resident and had four children, all of whom had grown up by the time of my fieldwork. Esmeralda and her husband live in one of the smallest houses in the village. They have a vegetable garden and the husband has occasional jobs in construction work. *Manang* Esmeralda is one of the *Barangay* Health Workers in the community and she is a member of the KLAi. As she explains, her interest in community organizations is for the material benefits provided. As a *Barangay* Health Worker, she is entitled to free medical care at the hospital and, through the KLAi, she has availed herself of several loans to buy pigs.

The position of farmer women such as Esmeralda in the KLAi seems clear: they are the beneficiaries for whose needs the socio-economic projects are organized. However, *Manang* Esmeralda obtained more than this. She became enraptured with the teachings about modern values. *Manang* Esmeralda always received a lot of special attention from the officers of the KLAi. During activities of the KLAi and Health Workers, Esmeralda never said anything herself but was often herself addressed. In meetings, she was always singled out to illustrate whatever point an officer wanted to make. She was, for example, the only member of the KLAi to receive an award for having quickly repaid her loan. One of the teachers remarked:

"When you see Esmeralda, you don't want to give her a loan. You think she will never pay it back, she looks so poor. But she is a member, so she also got her loan. And she paid it back."

When Esmeralda paid back the loan, she was given a piece of paper acknowledging her good credit status. Since she was the only person given such an award, the implicit message was that if even Esmeralda had paid back, everybody could. Several times every meeting, *Manang* Esmeralda serves as an example. When an officer announces a municipal activity, for example, she says:

"When we go to that day, of course we want to make a good impression. So, Esmeralda, that means that we have to take a bath and put on a clean dress."

Reference to *Manang* Esmeralda's behavior also happens outside of meetings. The core group also interferes with her appearance and personal habits in everyday life. *Manang* Esmeralda is thought to be *dirty*. She is repeatedly told to take a bath and change clothes. One officer told me that she went to see Esmeralda to talk with her:

"I told her that she has to take a bath every day and that she especially has to take care to wash her vagina. I told her she should do that every night, so that when her husband wants to sleep with her she is fresh for him."

From this meddling in *Manang* Esmeralda's very personal life, a picture emerges of the core group turning the women's organization into a vehicle aimed at modernizing peasant women in the village. The core group seem as much engaged in the actual projects, as in their own project to transform the 'girls of yesteryear' into their version of 'modern Igorots'.

The question remains of how peasant women felt about this. Never during my field work did I encounter a woman who openly challenged the teachings of the core group, nor the loss of status they experienced. If these women had developed a counter discourse, it remained a carefully 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990).¹⁴ This does not mean that women simply subjected themselves to the education of the core group. From observation, they occasionally avoided, ignored, kept silent and withdrew. After the graduation, for example, I asked several participants if they had taken note of the Mayor's praise for the graduates, -who had been housekeepers for decades-, that they had finally learned to clean themselves and their houses. It turned out they had noticed, but had not taken offence. They had simply not felt addressed. As one of them said: "Of course, we know how to clean our houses but maybe some others don't".

Manang Esmeralda had her own way of challenging the ideas of the core group. She was the only person who withdrew from the literacy class. Like the other participants, Esmeralda had been "told by the midwife [i.e. *Manang* Juliet] to join the class". After some time, however, Esmeralda began to complain. Like her class mates, she was not able to retain what she learnt but, while the others enjoyed the classes, Esmeralda started to consider them a waste of her time. She never announced her withdrawal, but started to absent herself from the lessons. Moreover, she talked with several of the other participants in order to convince them to stop attending. These women told the teacher about the comments of Esmeralda.

Esmeralda's absence soon caught the attention of the core group and for some reason this annoyed them. I witnessed three occasions in which they spoke to her about it. First, one of the officers went to her house and told her to resume the classes. Second, another officer stopped her one day on the road and, in the presence of several other people, asked her why she had stopped coming to the classes. Third, it was made an issue at the KLAi meeting. When reporting about the class, one of the officers said there was a problem with attendance and that one of the women had dropped out. At that point everybody looked at Esmeralda. On all these occasions Esmeralda did not mention the fact that she found the class a waste of time. Once she replied that she had no pen to write. On other occasions, she kept silent. When looked at during the meeting, she stood up to pick a pear from a tree, which she started to peel and eat. When, finally, Mrs. Dulay explicitly asked her at the meeting why she did not participate any more, she just yawned several times as if the

question tired her and kept her face down until the discussion shifted to another topic.

The insistence of the core group that Esmeralda resume the literacy class does not tally with the idea that the class was a mere service to these women or even a social pastime. Apparently, they perceived her withdrawal as a challenge to their initiative and thus implicitly to them. They reacted by trying to make her resume her place in the class. The incident emphasizes the social change that has occurred in the village for women. Until very recently, Esmeralda, as an older woman, would command respect and authority. Today, the authority of the educated women in the core group has to remain undisputed. Trespassing against this unwritten rule by women like Esmeralda is not acceptable anymore.

Conclusion: Development discourse and social change

This chapter looked at development from a local perspective. From the point of view of local actors, development interventions are not isolated endeavours. Villagers' perception of projects is informed by their history with development, and they respond to programmes in relation to one another. Hence, I looked at how village women deal with the ensemble of development intervenors and projects. The perspective taken in this chapter sheds some light on notions of 'participation' and 'empowerment'. Development NGOs usually deploy a rationale to base their interventions on self-formulated needs of beneficiaries ('development on request') and contribute to the empowerment of their clients. When we look at projects from within, these notions become twisted due to the social differentiation in villages. Villages are not homogeneous. CWNGO started the literacy project in consultation with local women, just as a participatory approach would demand. However, the women consulted were not in fact the beneficiaries of the project. It was the local interface experts who decided *for* the old women that they needed this project. Participants in the project had simply entered because they were told to do so. This finding corresponds with several studies into local organizations, reviewed by Marcel Put (1998: 51-2), that call into question the roles of local elites in development interventions and the level of accountability in local organizations.

The case put forward in this chapter also puts a question mark over the notion of empowerment. It is not enough to evaluate development interventions for their allocation of material benefits. In addition, we should question how discursive notions that are introduced with development interventions may alter local social realities. As it turns out, local development actors master multiple development notions and use these for their own ends, for the requirements of the occasion, and to categorize different groups of actors. By mastering multiple development discourses, in other words, actors find room for manoeuvre to manipulate development for their own 'projects'. This is especially the case for those actors through whom development enters a locality. These interface actors are living illustrations of the

saying that 'knowledge is power'. At the same time we have to realize that other forms of power are at work in village development that are much more fluid. These remain largely unnoticed even by those actors involved in, to borrow the phrase from Magdalena Villarreal (1994), 'the wielding and yielding' of this power. This relates to what I have called the 'duality of discourse'. As the case of Kayatuan makes clear, the use of particular development notions has unintended repercussions for social relations in the village.

As I described, there are multiple meanings of development in this community that each draw on fragments of discourses of modernity and tradition. The everyday allocation and use of these discourses is one of the constituent elements of social change in the village. Language and power are closely intertwined. It is through the use and allocation of vocabulary among social actors that diversity and social distance find expression in everyday life (den Ouden 1979). Likewise, particular uses of development discourses can shape hierarchies and pattern social relations. The use of development discourses involves labelling practices, where actors are socially positioned by variously categorising them as instigators, catalysts or subjects of development (Wood 1985). The consequences of this can be far reaching and have not always been understood. For instance, it has often been suggested that the local elite are the first to appropriate development benefits. However, a close examination of the workings of development discourses may reveal that development reconstitutes the very meaning and composition of the local elite.

The selective use of development discourses can play a role in confirming, accelerating, or altering processes of social change in localities. It may affect local power relations in different ways. In an actor-oriented approach, power is seen as the emergent property of actors' everyday negotiations of meanings, properties and interests. The relationship between agency, power, and discourse varies in different situations. One extreme instance of this is perhaps epitomized by the cunning interface expert, who consciously manipulates knowledge as an instrument of power. In this case, agency is powerful and intended. The other extreme is where agency seems to disappear completely in the face of power, and discourse is exemplified by situations where social change is so slow that actors do not even realize it is happening. When Carla Risseuw (1988) stipulates that "fish don't talk about the water", she refers to a situation where women are not aware of the gradual but steady erosion of their position effected in the course of generations. In both cases however power relations are effected by actors' actions in manifold ways, some direct and intended but largely accumulated and unintended.

In the Kayatuan case, an NGO aimed to empower women by giving them access to the written world. Local actors transformed the project on the way. It became a project for old women who enjoyed getting together, playing at being schoolgirls and remembering the past. By defining the women as lacking something, namely the ability to read and write, and by turning the project into a vehicle for education about modern values, the project contributed to an erosion of the status of older women and underlined a widening gap between educated professionals and peasant women.

The different use of development notions further contributed to the social positioning of women, as in the discussion of a pig project. Although all members of the women organization availed of project benefits, the concomitant rationale differed. The women's core group that managed projects applied to themselves a discourse of "development as reward for personal effort", whereas for other members they used a discourse of "development to help those in need". In doing so, they categorized themselves as the *bringers* of development and the ordinary members as *undergoing* development. The peasant members enjoyed a project which they considered was responding to poor people's needs. However, they obtained more than they 'bargained' for. They were enrolled in a discourse to live up to modern standards, which increasingly locked them into a position of social inferiority.

Hence, women's development interventions in Kayatuan played into local processes of social ordering. In the course of a lifetime, the status of older women had changed considerably. Previously the sturdy and strong peasant represented the ideal type of Igorot woman. Elder women enjoyed a status of seniority on the basis of increased wisdom with age. Nowadays, the status of peasant women is eroded in favour of educated professionals. Peasants are mainly associated with dark skins and dirty bodies, professionals on the other hand are clean. Notions that distinguish between development as solidarity for those in need, as reward for personal effort, and as a project for community modernization contribute to these changed realities.

To conclude, the case of Kayatuan points to the need to look into local everyday practices to assess the emergent meanings and consequences of NGO interventions. As a result of the way in which local people negotiate and bend the meaning of development, NGO interventions may evolve in quite a different way to those envisioned, even in cases where, at face value, they were realized according to plan. This theme will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

Notes

¹ An earlier version of this chapter will be published in *Human Organization* (see Hilhorst forthcoming).

² Saudi is a generic term, used in Kayatuan to connote all the Gulf states.

³ In a sample of eight women whose life histories I came to know in detail, only one had resided her entire life in Kayatuan. Of the others, as many as five had temporarily migrated out as children. Two of them had arranged to go to High School at a time when that was not yet encouraged by parents, one of them sought employment, two had run away from an evil teacher and an evil stepmother respectively and one had moved to relatives in Kalinga because she had heard that "the houses there were so big".

⁴ See the volume of Ong and Peletz (1995: 10) for transformations in masculinity in South East Asia, marked among others things by the label of man as 'deficient provider'.

⁵ This present conception of their own 'dirty' past coincides with earlier lowland perceptions of Igorots as 'dirty'. If a lowland child was dirty, around 1900, his mother would say: "You Igorot, go to the well and take a bath" (quoted in Scott 1993: 55).

⁶ 'Cleanliness' in the highlands seems mainly introduced by outsiders. According to the old people in the village, their parents hardly ever took a bath. This is not the case in the entire Philippines. According to William Henry Scott, lowland Philippine societies used to have strong norms about cleanliness prior to colonial times (Scott 1997: 116-7).

⁷ Many Kayatuan uphold the image of their village as consisting of peaceful people, who were afraid of the head-hunters of Bontoc and whose only involvement in tribal wars was as victims. Some men, however, take pride in their past. One old man told me: "We were the fiercest of all. We had war with all the other tribes, even Sabangan, but also Bontoc, Otucan and Hapao in Ifugao. *In-gangsa-an da*, they played the gongs to celebrate, whenever they had taken someone. So when the people in Sabangan heard the gongs, they started to cry because they knew that one of them has been taken by the Pingad people [to which Kayatuan belongs]". In 1902, a missionary described the Pingad people [and the colonial authorities] as follows: "At times victors, other times conquered, even the worst strokes of misfortune have not made them give up their warlike instinct and customs. We have already seen how in the year 1853 the first governor of the district was compelled to punish this village severely for the outrages and murders that had been committed in the weaker ones, and for its refusal to comply with the laws of the authorities. The expedition departed in April 1853, and Pingad still wished to try its simple arms against the expeditionary troops, but suffered so terrible a disappointment, and was so rigorously castigated that it did not disobey orders again, nor did it interfere with the villages of the district of Lepanto. But seeing that it was impossible to continue fighting against firearms except at great disadvantage, Pingad found means to satiate its sanguinary passion by making ferocious war on the village of Talubing. So it is a rare year in which both towns did not have to lament over some casualty among their people, some due to surprise attacks and others to formal battles" (Angel-Perez 1902/1988: 186). Perez continues, describing two 'battles' from 1854 to 1891 (*ibid.*: 185-187).

⁸ The KLAi experience underlines the difficulty in defining NGOs (chapter 1). Note the reverse relation between NGO and government in this locality. Government employees cannot be part of local government, so NGOs become their domain. Local government, on

the other hand, is filled with farmers, who have a much more distant relation to government agencies than the NGO officers of the community.

⁹ Fieldnotes December 1994.

¹⁰ The cash prizes were obtained from a German sponsored nation-wide health programme, called HAMIS. One of the objectives of this programme was to identify "undiscovered health management". In order to do so, they organized contests, cleverly building on an extremely popular mechanism in the Philippines. Organizations, both government and non-government, are invited to enter the contest and selected winners are given prizes, to expand or sustain their activities. Once an organization is a HAMIS winner, it is enrolled in a range of HAMIS sponsored activities (HAMIS 1995).

¹¹ Fieldnotes June 1995.

¹² Fieldnotes February 1996.

¹³ Note the way the multiplicity of community organizations plays a role in the handling of conflict. On the one hand, they provide ways to smooth conflict as in the case of Mrs. Balatas who was offered the Presidency of a new organization to palliate her. On the other, one's membership is used to manipulate, as an expression of subtle protest, as in the case of this teacher. In a society where open conflicts are avoided if possible, the signal of withholding membership is meant and received as a statement of protest (cf Scott 1985, Kerkvliet 1991).

¹⁴ Women among themselves spoke Kankanaey, their local language, which I unfortunately could not understand. I thus missed possible references in everyday conversations. However, never once during interviews (in Ilokano and in English) was this referred to.



5

Modelling Development: NGO Room for Manoeuvre

In order to bring about development for poor or marginalized target groups, NGOs work with intervention models. In this chapter I look at one such model and see how it works in practice. I analyse how NGO officers and villagers shape the organizing processes of local People's Organizations. My analysis aims to come to grips with the dynamics of intervention processes. In an actor-oriented approach, development interventions are defined as 'ongoing, socially-constructed and negotiated processes'. The approach starts from the notion of multiple realities and views interventions as taking place in arenas of struggle where different life-worlds and discourses meet (Long and van der Ploeg 1994: 82). If, therefore, we want to unravel intervention, it is not enough simply to measure performance against some kind of proclaimed target. One must take into account the practices by which a model is constructed and transformed in processes of intervention. Hence, I follow the advice of Norman Long and I focus

"upon intervention *practices* as shaped by the interaction among the various participants, rather than simply on intervention *models* [...] The central problem for analysis becomes that of understanding the processes by which external interventions enter the life-worlds of the individuals and groups affected and thus come to form part of the resources and constraints of the social strategies they develop." (Long 1992: 35)

The central NGO of this book, CWNGO, the Cordillera Women's NGO, belongs to a Consortium of development NGOs in the Cordillera that has developed a method for development called 'step-by-step' organizing. The NGOs do not want to implement a particular programme, but instead want to *facilitate an organizing process*

of People's Organizations (POs). The step-by-step model stipulates that organizing needs to be done in a certain order: People's Organizations are not supposed to proceed to the next step until they are 'ready'. I start this chapter by elaborating how this model leans on notions of modern organizations and the linearity of planned intervention. The implementation of the step-by-step model requires that NGOs have the room for manoeuvre to control this process. After delineating the concept of 'room for manoeuvre', I first set out to identify how NGO room for manoeuvre becomes confined by the *ensemble* of development interventions and associational patterns that have emerged in the relations between states, NGOs and People's Organizations. Then I discuss several cases of intervention processes in the villages, which turn out to have all kinds of directions, ruptures, closures and 'fanning out'. Villagers have their own projects and understandings that interfere with the NGO-desired organizing process. How villagers imagine the identity and role of NGOs seems to be more decisive for these organizing processes than the envisaged NGO model.

As I show, then, the step-by-step organizing model has little to do with actual organizing in the villages of the Cordillera. However, before ending the chapter I try to discover why in fact NGOs nonetheless adhere to this model. I am interested, in other words, in the meaning of NGO intervention models for the organization itself. Even though these models are created with the purpose of steering local intervention, we cannot assume that that is what they do. They may do quite different things in practice. As I suggest, the model may be more important for processes of sense making within NGOs and for regulating relations between them than for steering local organizing processes.

Taking it step-by-step

NGOs in the Cordillera are not interested in implementing a particular programme, but want to facilitate an 'organizing process'. The organizing process has a specific meaning for the NGOs, which is different from the way I conceptualized organizing as a process. Whereas I defined processes descriptively as discontinuous, emerging and open-ended, the NGOs use the concept in a goal-oriented manner. They want to realize self-reliant National Democratic People's Organizations and have developed a step-by-step organizing model to achieve this end. According to the model, the organizing process for People's Organizations is supposed to follow a certain trajectory. It projects a road towards a moment of arrival. The point of completion is when the NGO can phase out and People's Organizations can continue to organize activities and projects without assistance and as part of the National Democratic political movement.

Part of the step-by-step organizing trajectory of the NGO-Consortium

Steps in organizing

1. *Introduction of organization*

- 1.1 Social investigation
- 1.2 Establishing contacts in the different communities
- 1.3 Initial propaganda work
- 1.4 Introducing the organization
- 1.5 Giving initial education
- 1.6 Mobilizing for alliance, propaganda, and data gathering

2. *Initial organizing*

- 2.1 Recruitment and formation of group members
- 2.2 Deepening of social investigation and class analysis
- 2.3 Giving education on basic peasant course and situationer
- 2.4 Mobilizations: encouraging participation of members in organizational activities for continuous propaganda and recruitment, for further social investigation and technical needs

3. *Formal formation of organization*

- 3.1 Preparation for the formation of organization
 - 3.1a Expansion of membership
 - 3.1b Class analyze and consolidate members
 - 3.1c Giving higher levels of education to more or less consolidated members and continue giving basic education to the new members
 - 3.1d Formation of committees in preparation for the assembly or congress

Things to be prepared by the committee:

- 1. Constitution and by-laws
- 2. Particular program based on the class analysis and the general program
- 3. Tactical program of action
- 4. Guidelines in choosing a leader
 - i. Congress proper
 - i.a Unification on the constitution and by laws and other documents
 - i.b Election

4. *Preparation of the things needed for the congress*

The model identifies a number of steps for organization building, education and socio-economic activities. Steps for organization building include entry into the community, initial social investigation and contact-building, formation of a core group, formulation of a constitution and by-laws, expansion of membership, and formation of committees. The education programme involves training in leadership skills (basic and advanced), a range of orientations and 'situationers' on the political economy of the region and the country, and, for the case of CWNGO, situationers on the position of women. Socio-economic activities include skills training to handle projects, such as training in basic bookkeeping and the implementation of projects. The basic principle of organizing is not to proceed to a next step, until 'ready'. For example, the NGO staff members (called the organizers) should first have confidence in the abilities and commitment of the core-group before proceeding to the formation of an organization, and activities should not be planned until the organization's constitution and by-laws have been implemented.

Special caution in the organizing trajectory is given to socio-economic projects. As explained in previous chapters, the NGO Consortium forms part of a wider political movement, the National Democratic movement, whose aim it is to address the 'basic problems' in society instead of simply reforming some of their effects. The NGOs acknowledge the need for socio-economic projects but are convinced these should not be taken on unless the organization has built up the capacity to manage them. According to National Democratic thinking, socio-economic projects must contribute to the overall organizing process. If they become a goal in themselves, this is considered 'reformist'.

The model for organizing is designed for situations where no formal organizations exist. There is a variation of the model for situations where organizations have already been formed. The Cordillera Women's NGO, CWNGO, for example, usually starts organizing in villages where Women's Organizations have been previously formed by churches or government agencies. The mode of operation in such cases is to build on these existing structures and to reorient them to political and gender issues. Once an organization is brought on track in terms of the envisaged organizing process, it will follow the subsequent steps.

When we look at the step-by-step model, three features stand out. Firstly, the model aims to build organizations according to a *modern* rationale. It wants organizations to follow formal procedures with laws and by-laws that stipulate the organizational set-up, a set of officers with prescribed responsibilities and authority, and a transparent accountability structure. Secondly, the model is based on a notion of *linear* development. Although the projections for the organizing process are not boxed into time bound projects, it assumes that progress towards the projected goal is possible. This progress is not exactly conceived of as a straight line from A to B. It is often recognized that the organizing process is composed of progress and regress, steps forward at times undone by steps backwards. The NGO actors have the image that with a lot of patience one can muddle through the set-backs so that the process can crawl towards completion, which nonetheless contains an idea of long term 'progress'.

Thirdly, a model of planned intervention is linked to notions of *control*. Drawing a plan assumes one has the capacity to implement it. In this case the situation is paradoxical because the model is geared towards stimulating people to organize themselves. On the other hand, the step-by-step approach requires organizers to proactively steer the process in the direction set by the organization's 'vision'. The resulting compromise is referred to as *facipulation*, a combination of facilitating and manipulating (Ibana 1994: 26). Hence, people are supposed to organize themselves, but NGOs require room for manoeuvre to make this happen in the way they desire.

Room for manoeuvre

The extent to which an NGO can control intervention in a village depends on its room for manoeuvre. The concept of room for manoeuvre is apt for understanding the dynamics of development intervention, and is central to an actor-oriented approach. It refers to the social space actors have or lack to enable their ideas and projects. The idea of room for manoeuvre allows us to analyse the confinements of the social space available to actors. The room for manoeuvre of actors to fulfil their projects is restricted by circumstantial, material and institutional limitations. However, how these confine actors depends partly on how actors perceive and act upon them. An actor orientation emphasizes that regardless of the nature of the constraints, actors socially construct their room for manoeuvre through their knowledgeable and capable responses to constraints. At this point it should be added, however, that agency does not necessarily mean that actors in all circumstances stretch their room for manoeuvre to the widest limits. On the contrary, actors continuously imagine constraints that are only made effective because actors devise patterns of practice according to them.

How actors expand their room for manoeuvre largely depends on their effectiveness in enrolling others in their projects (Latour 1986). This is effective agency (Long and van der Ploeg 1994: 66). It "depends crucially upon the emergence of a network of actors who become partially, though hardly ever completely, enrolled in the project and practices of some other person or persons" (*ibid.*). This means that agency is not simply a property of social actors, but gets socially constructed through networks and enrolment processes. Exploring the room for manoeuvre of NGOs to complete the organizing process in the villages, requires seeing how far NGO staff members can muster the effective agency to get villagers to internalize their ideas and follow the proposed action (or better formulate for themselves the desired actions in line with these ideas), thereby effectively delegating power to the NGO to control the organizing process.

Probing NGOs capacity to facilitate the development they envisage takes us invariably away from the ethnographic 'here and now' of interaction at the interface of intervention. Actors strategies draw on historically grown patterns of action, and on wider social processes, institutions and discourses. Although there are numerous ways in which this happens, I will discuss in particular two such elements: the

ensemble of development interventions and associational patterns of NGO-State-PO relations.

The ensemble of development interventions

In the preceding chapter I postulated that actors' responses to an NGO intervention can only be understood by looking at the *ensemble* of development interventions in the locality. Here I want to reiterate, with two arguments, the importance of this idea for understanding NGOs 'room for manoeuvre' in development. A first argument is practical: that is, it acknowledges that the presence of several players in development confines the room for manoeuvre for each of the intervenors. The availability of several players provides local actors with alternatives and exit options, and brings competing symbols, resources, and networks into the village. This undermines the possibilities for NGOs to implement the envisaged step-by-step organizing process. This organizing model implicitly assumes that an NGO and a PO have an exclusive relationship. Where organizations already exist, the model assumes that these organizations will be 'taken over' by the NGO. However, this condition is seldom, if ever, met. Local organizations normally have ties with several intervening agencies. All these agencies offer activities and work according to their own models of intervention. This interferes with the trajectory envisaged by the NGO Consortium. Thus, for example, when the Consortium withholds projects that the village organization is considered not ready for, this may be thwarted by other intervening agencies that nonetheless bring projects to the community.

The second argument concerns the fact that the *memory* people have of previous interventions tends to shape the way they imagine development relations, and accord identity to intervenors. This influences their responses to present ones. Let me elaborate this with an example. In one village where I did a study, I was struck by the modest requests of villagers in comparison to the problems they experienced in organizing their livelihoods. Instead of asking NGOs to help them with, for instance, coping with rising prices for agricultural inputs or a badly needed reconstruction of the irrigation system, they requested a set of little wooden chairs for the day-care centre. What happened, I believe, was that the requests were not based on actually perceived needs, but instead reflected their assessment of the kind of assistance NGOs could provide. In this area, several small infrastructural projects had been offered in the past by other NGOs, as well as government line agencies and politicians at election times. The *memory* people had of this history of development interventions had shaped the ambitions of the People's Organization or what they thought they could ask for (see also Olivier De Sardan 1988). They boxed their demands to NGOs according to their practical knowledge about development organizations.

Associational patterns

The room for manoeuvre that an NGO can marshal is affected by the relations between NGOs, the State and People's Organizations, or more precisely by how

actors perceive and respond to these relations. In this respect, Jenny Pearce speaks of *associational cultures*, or “patterns of interactions between organizations and the state which vary widely across societies and change over time” (Pearce 1997: 261). The historical development of the relations between the state and organizations of civil society makes a difference to how an NGO operates and for how local people respond to NGO initiatives (van der Borgh 1999: 22).

Although I agree that NGO-State-Society relations are constitutive of NGO interventions, we should be careful not to generalize about State-NGO relations as if the state were a unitary phenomenon. At the very least, we have to distinguish between political representatives, the bureaucracy of line agencies, and the military. In the Cordillera region the relation between the NGOs and each of these parts of the state have evolved differently through time. With the line agencies, relations of co-operation have been possible even in the most troublesome periods in history. The relation with the political administration of the government changes with different presidencies. The relation with the military has generally been antagonistic, but has varied in intensity throughout the region and through time. The military always considered the Consortium NGOs as proponents of the communist movement. Until the early 1990s, military action and propaganda against NGOs played a major role in the region. This was followed by a period of relative laxity until 1996, when the military again expanded their involvement in the Cordillera.

Furthermore, it is not enough to fine-grain the understanding of associational cultures by incorporating state-segmentation into the analysis. It should further take into account the different ways in which these relations evolve locally, even within one country or region. Let me explain this by portraying a locality (such as a village) at the centre of a set of concentric circles, representing political arenas in the village, region, province, country and finally the globalized world of international development. How the relation between states and NGOs becomes shaped in a village draws upon these relations in the other arenas, but is not a simple translation. It derives its *couleur locale* from local political history, the allocation and use of local resources and the personalities and performance of local office bearers. For this reason, I do not want to adhere to the concept of associational culture. This concept denotes a regularity in historically grown associations applicable for a whole country. Instead, I prefer to speak of *associational patterns*. These patterns are differentially shaped in localities: they are not autonomous from associational patterns in other arenas, but get transformed according to local contingencies. In the introductory chapter I argued that organizations seem to appear as separate entities, but often consist of overlapping actor networks whose interactions have a very different content than that which follows from official relations. Likewise, boundaries and relations between (segments of) the state and NGOs are not preordained. If we want to establish how, against the backdrop of regional developments, NGO-State relations evolve in different provinces, we have to establish how these evolve in the localities.

The staff of NGOs often originate from the province where they work and their tribal affiliation and family standing may cut across political differences in shaping relations with the state. In most provinces, NGO staff members have been in and out

of the state bureaucracy. Several hold elected positions at *barangay*,¹ municipal or provincial level, at the same time as their position in the NGO. Some even have relatives in the military, and can make use of certain facilities such as their telephone equipment in the field. The room for manoeuvre of the provincial NGO actors is therefore situational. The situations in Mountain Province and Kalinga may illustrate the variety in state-NGO relations and the clout NGOs have in shaping intervention. The NGO Consortium in Kalinga is headed by a medical doctor with a private clinic of his own, who is married into a family of big businesses, and who is himself from a family that produced several politicians of regional importance. This lends the NGOs a certain status and respect in the province. In contrast, Mountain Province is governed by a politician with a strong hold over the provincial government and bureaucracy and an equally strong dislike of the NGO Consortium. His wife has established a couple of NGOs herself and actively campaigns against the Consortium, especially against CWNGO. The CWNGO staff in the province, not from influential families, are hardly a match for her and the relation remains openly antagonistic. Even within one region, associational patterns thus evolve quite differently.

With these elements of the ensemble of development interventions and associational patterns in mind, let me elaborate on NGO room for manoeuvre in shaping intervention processes by discussing some case-studies.

Luaya:² constituting NGO-PO relations

Luaya is a *sitio*³ of 23 families in the Province of Kalinga. NGO involvement in Luaya dates back to the 1970s, and there have been an extensive number of NGO activities. Hence, in this village one expects, if anywhere, NGOs to be effective in steering the organizing process. However as the case will reveal, the same closeness that provides NGOs with ample room for intervention, also gives rise to alternative narratives that constitute the organizing process. Here we can use the work of Alberto Arce, who speaks of the 'social life' of a project, to denote that projects are "constituted of a complex set of relationships, interests and ideas that are socially defined by the different actors involved" (Arce 1993: 147). According to this author, during the implementation of a project a number of social, situational, cultural and institutional conditions are locally translated and transformed. Subsequently, "these constitute the social life of a project which penetrates the political and administrative contexts of the project" (*ibid.*: 147-148). In the village of Luaya, the NGO intervention process was dominated by overriding interpretations of kinship relations and local concerns.

Luaya, with 23 families, is situated on the off-road shore of the Chico river in the Province of Kalinga, a thirty minutes hike from the adjacent sitio of Paregatan with 20 families. In comparison to the village of Kayatuan in the previous chapter, Luaya constitutes a small life-world. None of the adult residents has a history of migration beyond the provincial capital, and many have never been to Baguio City. Apart from some battery-operated radios, news from the outside world reaches the village only through word of mouth. Nobody has a salaried job, everybody lives from subsistence

cultivation. There are wet rice fields, fruit trees and slash-and-burn swidden fields for dry rice and vegetables. The latter have increasingly turned into permanent gardens. Pigs and chicken provide occasional meat, fish is obtained from the Chico river. Coffee and vegetables are sold to generate cash for medical expenses and school fees. Luaya is an area where village relations are regulated through the traditional institution of the *bodong*, the peace pact (see chapter 2). One such *bodong* was broken at the time of my fieldwork, as a result of a killing, and a situation of tribal war had evolved. In practice this meant that during the negotiations for a settlement, people hesitated to go to town unaccompanied and brought back some youth from Baguio to continue their studies in nearby Tabuk. Although these traditional institutions thus continue to play a role, their significance is diminishing and few *bodongs* have been confirmed or prolonged in the last 15 years.

Luaya history of state, people and NGOs

The history of the NGOs in Luaya is rooted in the struggle against dams in the Chico river in the 1970s. Once constructed, the Dams would inundate the entire area of Luaya, the adjacent *sitio* of Parekatan and several other areas. The local protest of villagers was reinforced by the support of the churches and, some time later, the armed support of the New People's Army (NPA) of the communist National Democratic Front (see chapter 2). The struggle against the dams occupied the residents of the river *sitios* for a period of more than 10 years. They were involved in all kinds of legal action, and for years people cooked food for the NPA and found ways to get it to them, involving practically everybody in the villages.

In these years NPA cadres (increasingly consisting of local people) gave a political education in the *sitios*, and started to encourage people to form underground organizations, as a kind of alternative government. In 1986, the struggle against the dams ended, when President Aquino first froze and finally abolished the project. A few months later, however, the military stepped up actions against the NPA and underground People's Organizations. A period of military raids followed in which the military sealed off the entire area of Luaya. No one was allowed to visit without official permission and people were cut off from their fields because of extremely restrictive curfew hours. Food shortage was the result, exacerbated by the fact that even close relatives had a hard time to obtain a visitor's pass. In 1990, this culminated in an evacuation. All residents had to abandon the village for the military to carry out air raids, including bombings. This lasted several weeks, and it took several months more before food production had effectively resumed. This period is still often referred to in the village, and one woman who became permanently psychologically disturbed in the wake of the evacuation is a constant reminder, feeding people's ongoing resentment against the military.

Apart from the underground organizations formed by the New People's Army, Luaya also has a history of above-ground People's Organizations. There has been an organization, since 1957, simply called the 'Community', that generated money from within the village to install a sugar mill and construct waterworks. The organization had a credit fund until 1987 when the treasurer left the area, and the 'Community'

came to a standstill. In 1985, an organization was formed for the youth, that was affiliated to the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) that spearheaded the regional social movement. Soon, however, its active members were under the constant scrutiny of the military for being NPA sympathizers, and subsequently had to leave the area.

In 1990, the women of Luaya and another four Riverside *sitios*, formed a Women's Organization that two years later started to develop projects with the support of the Cordillera Women NGO (CWNGO). Soon thereafter, staff of the CPA and other NGOs of the Consortium began to visit the area again, in order to revive the organizing process. This was not easy. At the start, every meeting was dominated by arguments over the controversy surrounding the credit fund of the former organization, the "Community". When this old organization stopped functioning in 1987, 30,000 Pesos (equivalent to approximately 400 US\$) had simply disappeared from the credit fund, and the remaining outstanding funds had stayed with the credit takers. Accusations continued over the money that disappeared, as well as discussions over the question of whether the credit takers should still pay the outstanding interest on their loans (with an interest set at 30% per month, this amounted to considerable sums of money). Despite this unresolved conflict, a new People's Organization was formed in 1993 with members of all 23 families, again in affiliation with the Cordillera People's Alliance. Since then, the Luaya People's Organization (LUPPO) has developed a range of activities, including several projects supported by NGOs of the Consortium.

The relation between the Consortium of development NGOs, including the CPA and CWNGO, and the 23 families of Luaya (plus the 20 families of Paregatan) remains closely linked to local political history and continues to be a potent ingredient in the organizing processes in the Riverside *sitios*. Everybody in Luaya closely identifies with the NGOs. They insist that "the government does nothing for us, we get everything from the NGOs". This statement tells us more about people's perceptions than about the history of project implementation in this area. When I made a list of the services and projects in the *sitios* during interviews, it turned out there were quite a lot of state-sponsored projects. However, due to the Chico Dams episode and subsequent militarization, people remain convinced that the state is anti-people and cannot be trusted. In contrast, the NGOs that entered the area after the Chico Dams struggle was over, are considered allies of the people. These NGOs belong to the same National Democratic movement as the former NPA comrades, and the more politicized villagers appreciate that although they look different and have projects, the present NGOs "still have the *principio*".

People's memories stretch farther back than organizational histories. Many of the former activists and NPA cadres have moved into NGO work, and villagers are aware of this past of the older NGO staff. They will always be 'old comrades', regardless of their present employment. In addition, quite a few of the younger staff of NGOs originate from the Riverside *sitios* that were at the heart of the anti-dams struggle. Politicized as children, they find employment with NGOs as adults. No less than 6 staff members of the NGO Consortium in Kalinga originate from the 43 families of Luaya and Paregatan. Their parents are core officers of the People's

Organizations in the *sitios*. Two brothers from Paregatan have found employment in an NGO. One of them married a third NGO staff member who is a daughter of a Paregatan family. Three NGO staff members are from Luaya, two of them are brothers. These staff members are related through kinship to practically everybody in the *sitios*. As we will see, the multiple ties between staff members and villagers have some particular consequences for the organizing process in the area.

The Luaya organizing process: the official history

When I started my fieldwork in Luaya in 1996, both People's Organizations and the Women's Organizations had developed a large number of projects and activities. The Luaya People's Organization was implementing a food and nutrition programme with one of the Consortium NGOs. They handed out *carabaos* (water buffalos) for animal traction, distributed seeds and rented out farm implements. In addition, the organization constructed water pipes and taps to bring water to the *sitios*. The Women's Organization had obtained two loans from CWNGO, which they used for setting up an emergency fund and a rice loan fund. They had been able to repay both loans, and continued to operate an emergency fund with the money they had earned by raising interest on loans. They also had a pig dispersal project. Apart from these socio-economic projects, there had been numerous training activities, political situationers, education on health and skills training to operate the organization and the projects. The village also hosted a Congress of the CPA and received a large number of national and international visitors interested in hearing about local history with the anti-dam struggle and their present organizational activities.

Despite the impressive record of activities, the organizational process in 1996 had become problematic. Before I went to the field, I was given a briefing by one of the co-ordinators of the NGO network, who was called Butch. Butch came from Paregatan, and was one of the NGO staff originating from the area. Having been engaged in the Chico dams struggles as a youngster, and after having spent years in Manila, he had come back to the area to work with the NGOs. His wife and child lived in his parents' house in Paregatan. The briefing of Butch lasted for two hours, in which he told me in great detail about the concerns of the NGO co-ordinators regarding Luaya. According to him, activities had gone down, and there was little interest in attending meetings. People had developed, as he expressed it, a 'project mentality', meaning that they were more interested in the socio-economic activities, and not so much in issues concerning the community or the region. Moreover, the Women's Organization had problems, since a number of women, not from Luaya but from more off-shore *sitios*, had announced that they wanted to leave the Riverside Women's Organization to revive their Rural Improvement Club with the Department of Agriculture.

The co-ordinators of the NGO Consortium ascribed the current problems to two factors. Firstly, they blamed the two NGOs that implemented socio-economic projects. They said that both CWNGO and the NGO responsible for the food and nutrition programme had not properly co-ordinated with the Consortium. They also implied that the NGOs had been implementing projects without sufficiently taking

into account the intervention model of step-by-step organizing. In particular, they had allowed the socio-economic work to outrun a solid organizational and political build-up in the organizing process. Secondly, Butch blamed the difficulties on a number of conflicts internal to the community. The matter of the community credit fund of the 1980s continued to play up in organizational meetings, and quarrels came about over several other issues. In particular, there were problems between two women, who were both influential in village affairs. These women were Lorena and Francesca. Lorena had been married to Francesca's brother, and when her husband died there was a conflict about the distribution of land. It so happened that Lorena and Francesca were also the two women whose sons work with the NGOs. Thus the view of the NGO Consortium co-ordinators was that the organizing process had been hampered because the NGOs had not played according to the rules and because of distractions caused by intra-village conflicts. Before continuing the official NGO narrative on how this problematic situation was to be solved, let me first elaborate on the organizing process viewed from within the village.

Alternative narratives: the social life of the organizing process

During my fieldwork in 1996, it became clear indeed that there were tensions in Luaya. Gossip and quarrels abounded, and some conversations could not be held unless in the fields or at other places where nothing could be overheard. On the other hand, looking at the organizations, the situation was not as 'bad' as I had anticipated on the basis of the introductory talk with Butch. There was a lot of project activity, meetings were regularly held and well attended. What became most remarkable for me about the gossip and quarrels was the everyday nature of the issues involved, and how they were intertwined with the close social ties to the NGO staff.

The quarrels were about local and detailed issues. As I mentioned above, the life-world, the "lived-in and largely taken-for-granted world of social actors" (Schutz and Luckmann 1973) in Luaya is mainly confined to village and family affairs. They became involved in a political movement of the region, at a time when their land and resources were immediately threatened by the prospect of dams in the Chico River. Although they continue to be part of this movement, they are at the same time rather indifferent to what happens beyond the village. One of our neighbours in the village put it quite pointedly: "As long as we have three meals a day, we have nothing to do with those people in Manila". They enjoy listening to NGO education on 'wider issues' but many people say they easily forget the content. The underground village organizations of the 1980s are less remembered for their alternative political orientation, as for their initiatives to confine pigs to pigpens, and to take measures against the use of alcohol and marihuana.

Given the everyday interests of people, where the matter of a stray pig can capture the attention of the whole village for days, it is not surprising that the disappearance of a substantial amount of money of the old community organization still enrages people ten years after the fact. Added to this old conflict are questions about the use of NGO generated resources. One evening I was invited into the house of a man who -whispering- enumerated a list of items that allegedly had been

appropriated by village-mates after the Congress of the CPP in the village, one year before. The list included a sack of rice, a box of batteries for radios and flashlights, and one can of gasoline. This man, and other people who talked to me about this, did not blame the NGOs for this problem. NGO staff members were generally admired. In the eyes of the villagers these people had forfeited a career in the city after their college education, to devote themselves instead to ameliorate life in the villages they had come from. No, not the NGO staff members, but their relatives were implicated in the complaints. Missing items were claimed to have been confiscated by close family members of the NGO staff. Although people only wanted to talk about these issues in secret, it turned out that the NGO Consortium was well aware of the allegations. According to them, they were ungrounded: CPA had deliberately brought back everything after the Congress to avoid these kinds of problems. Unfortunately, people in the village had not believed this.

Relatives of NGO staff members were not just suspected of abusing their close relationship to the NGOs, they were also looked upon with more moral scrutiny than others. Especially the behaviour of Lorena and Francesca towards each other and towards village matters was secretly criticized. Invariably, critical comments would be topped with a remark, such as: "They should know better, they even have their children in the NGOs". This is well illustrated by one event that happened during my fieldwork. Ever since I arrived in the village, people talked a lot about stray pigs. There were pigpens, but several people allowed their pigs to roam around in search of food, which inevitably led them to trespass into vegetable gardens. One morning, we were woken up by loud screams. It turned out that an elderly neighbour had lost his temper when he found one of Lorena's pigs in his garden. He shouted with anger and kept hitting the galvanized iron sheet of a pigpen with a big stick, waking up the whole village. The fact that the pig was Lorena's, seemed to evoke the old man's anger more than the damage the animal had done. He kept on repeating:

"It is even she, whose child is with the NGO, who does not follow the rules. She is always nicely talking to the NGOs, but she does not even implement what we agreed."

Conflicts among their relatives also affected the NGO staff members. One CWNGO staff member felt ashamed that her parents were involved in these conflicts. She considered herself a bad organizer because "I cannot even organize my own family". This was exacerbated when her marriage to another NGO staff member from the area turned out problematic and became a topic for extensive talk in the villages. Another NGO staff member from Luaya seemed to feel personally offended when things went wrong. One evening, for example, the gong, which is used to call people to a meeting, suddenly sounded. This was at 11 o'clock in the night! It turned out that the organizer had become angry because to his mind too few people had attended the meeting held earlier in the evening. When somebody had commented: "you should not be mad with us, because we attended in the first place", he clanged the gong to wake people up for a middle-of-the-night meeting. A third staff member, the same Butch who had given me the briefing, was also enmeshed in local village politics. He was a *barangay* councillor, and acted like a political rival to the *barangay*

captain. Not only were the NGO staff members' performance affected by their social and political entanglement in the village, this also had repercussions on how they reported on the Luaya organizing process in regional meetings. Their reports about the everyday quarrels and 'problems' contributed to an image of the Luaya People's Organization as a problematic case, notwithstanding its good record of project implementation which continued irrespective of the quarrels.

The organizing process in 1999

As explained above, my first period of fieldwork in the first half of 1996 coincided with an assessment of the organizing process of the NGO Consortium and Luaya People's Organizations. This period brought out the ongoing conflicts very strongly and became the height of trouble. Soon thereafter, however, things started to improve. When I came back to the area in 1999, many new projects had started. Waterworks were expanded and most families now had a private latrine. A rice mill was installed in the village, which was a huge relief for the women who, according to an NGO study, sometimes spent as much as one third of their days pounding rice. During this visit, I talked to Butch again as well as to the other co-ordinators of the NGO Consortium. They were happy with the way problems had been resolved. The People's Organization worked very well. In the eyes of the NGO managers, this improvement was mainly due to a better structure of co-ordination. The co-ordination between the NGOs was clarified and an arrangement was made in which one NGO became the lead agency and took responsibility for the entire organizing process. They also reported that socio-economic activities were once again better balanced by education. Only the Riverside Women's Organization had become dormant. However, rather than a misfortune this was the more or less deliberate outcome of NGO intervention, which, following the policies set by the rectification of the National Democratic movement, had prioritized the mixed People's Organization. They had never tried to settle the problem in the Women's Organization, and had even redirected a project that was acquired by the women to the mixed organization. All in all, the case of Luaya was considered a successful illustration of the rectification campaign with its emphasis on better co-ordination and a more systematic and solid application of the step-by-step organizing model (see chapter 3).

This NGO narrative was partly sustained when I went to the village. The villagers shared the enthusiasm of the NGO staff for organizing. There had been many projects, people were active in their organization, and the tension was elevated. Even the pigs seemed to have learnt their lesson and now stayed in the pigpens. One of my friends in the village laughed heartily at the memory of the period I had spent in Luaya, and said:

"Then we were always quarrelling, but that is over. I am even ashamed that you were here then and heard all these stories."

Once again, however, the NGO narrative was counterbalanced by everyday discourses and practices of kinship and the social constitution of the relation between

NGOs and villagers. Firstly, it turned out that the ongoing family feuds had largely been subdued after a personal tragedy. In 1996, a daughter of Lorena died giving birth, together with her baby. This was a tremendous shock in the village. Soon after this happened, some compromises were found regarding the lost money of the community fund and conflicts over the pigs. Lorena lost most of her interest in village affairs and withdrew from active involvement. Even her relationship with Francesca improved and the two could occasionally be seen together visiting the provincial capital. Secondly, the new co-ordination structure had the effect that those NGO staff members with family in the village were deployed elsewhere. As a result, they lost some of their personal immersion in the organizing process of Luaya. Butch, moreover, had withdrawn his position in *barangay* politics. With some of the tensions resolved, and the complications of personal staff involvement reduced, the social space emerged for the organizing process to develop, for the time being, as envisaged by the NGOs.

Alternative narratives in Luaya: analysis

The story of the organizing process in Luaya can be told in terms of NGO politics. This is a narrative of how an initially successful and politicized organization process was eroded by a lack of co-ordination and a penchant for socio-economic projects, until a refreshed approach of solid organizing pulled the organization back on track. However, this is at most a partial story. It is challenged, or at least complemented by an alternative narrative that focuses on everyday languages of kinship, family feuds, and local history. The organizing initiatives of the NGOs cannot be viewed separately from the centrality of kinship and the social ties between NGOs and villages that are created by local political history.

Interlocking projects

The case of Luaya reveals that even in a village where NGOs are the major development interveners, and have become accepted and respected as such, the organizing process does not follow the rationale of a step-by step choreography directed by NGOs. Organizing processes appear as constructed by multiple actors and an amalgam of different discourses and practices. Rather than viewing interventions as linear processes, they can be seen as composed of interlocking projects of different actors with diverging lifeworlds, ideas and aims (Long and van der Ploeg 1989).

NGO staff members and local villagers through time developed complex multiple ties and multiple accountabilities. They act on the basis of their own translations of policy, discourses and ambitions. Villagers, on the other hand, are strategizing actors that naturally want to appropriate resources coming into the village for their own projects, be they material, social, or symbolic resources (see Elwert and Bierschenk 1988). However, the responses of staff members as well as

villagers are not just reflections of strategic considerations. Staff members are not the implementing arm of NGO policies, but invest their own meanings and ambitions into the process, as much inspired by their personal involvement with the village as by their NGO orientation. Villagers, on the other hand, base their expectations and responses as much on the social ties with NGO staff members as on their historically grown affinity with the NGO Consortium. Hence, there is no such thing as a step-by-step organizing model that is *interrupted* by adverse effects of kinship relations. Instead, the organizing process is *constituted* by these social ties. In the case of Luaya, the relation between state, people and NGOs as it grew through history, personal relations in the village, contingencies such as stray pigs, and the confinements of people's life-worlds, all join into shaping actors' responses and negotiations at the social interface of intervention.

Transforming modern organization

The relationships that evolved through time between NGOs and villagers have locally altered the way meetings are held, projects organized and activities conducted. This becomes clear when we examine the meaning of the People's Organization in the village. The People's Organization in Luaya has developed pretty much according to the modern ideal of formal organizations that is incorporated in the step-by-step organizing model of the Consortium NGOs. The organization had its laws and bylaws (in English) and there were no less than six separate committees responsible for aspects of the organization's activities and projects. Meetings were held according to modern organization standards. There was an agenda, people took turns in speaking, and discussions were followed by the adoption of resolutions and the distribution of tasks. That does not automatically mean that these meetings did what they were supposed to do, namely to regulate everyday organizational activities.

Villagers have their own historically grown organizing practices and patterns (Nuijten 1998: 217-26). Nuijten observed, for example, how meetings in a Mexican *ejido* did nothing one might expect from meetings: they appeared as a chaotic "arena for bickering and indecisive confrontation" (*ibid.*: 208-13). These meetings, however, turned out to have different symbolic meanings that could only be understood within the context of local organizational patterns. In a similar vein, we cannot assume that organizational features that have been adopted by villagers actually acquire the discursive meaning and functionality foreseen by the NGOs that introduced these features⁴.

In the case of Luaya, the ordered way of holding meetings reflected, I believe, on the one hand the desire of people living in a very small community to contain conflict to a tolerable proportion, which also characterized their wheeling and dealing outside of organizational matters. On the other, it seemed that people played along with the game of these meetings in order to pay respect to the well-appreciated NGOs. How seriously they played this game was apparent when one man commented after a meeting that they should have had name tags, even though the meeting consisted only of people from the 23 houses of Luaya. After this meeting

another person complained about the fact that one NGO staff member had presented a lecture wearing shorts. He felt that this NGO person should have replicated the respect shown by their attending the meeting, by dressing properly.

Respect and a sense of moral obligation seemed also informative of other aspect of the organization. Participating in NGO education was not just interesting, but also an expression of respect and gratitude. Likewise, the villagers politely followed the NGOs' suggestion to form separate committees for different activities. In practice, however, committees don't meet or, when they do, everybody attends their meetings so that they can keep an eye on what happens in the organization. The formal mode of organizing, then, becomes transformed in the localities of the villages. In the previous chapter we saw a Women's Organization that had taken on board a full set of officers, not with the purpose of expanding organizational activity, but in order to divert conflict and competition among women professionals. In the case of Luaya, villagers embraced this form of organization as a homage to the NGOs and as a strategy to confirm the social ties and obligations between NGO staff members and themselves.

Attributing identity to intervening agencies

There is one more element I would like to discuss in this exploration of NGO policy and room for manoeuvre in local intervention processes. This concerns how villagers accord identities and roles to NGOs. In order to elaborate this point, I briefly discuss three more cases of local NGO interventions in the Cordillera. The cases are derived from a series of impact studies in each of the provinces of the Cordillera that were performed during my stay with CWNGO. Each study assessed the organizing process in one village. The studies used a variety of techniques, including group interviews and individual interviews, and were conducted with a team, composed of regional and provincial staff of the CWNGO and other NGOs of the Consortium with activities in the same area. The duration of the studies was around one week each. They were not so much focused on data collection and analyses, but rather served as venues for discussion between NGO staff members from the team and villagers. The involvement of staff members from the region, as well as from different NGOs, gave rise to numerous discussions within the team on what should constitute the organizing process. The fieldwork became an encounter between staff and village people in which questions on what the NGO was meant to be and what it was in the eyes of the villagers, were always implicitly on the agenda.

Aritonin: NGOs as alternative government service

The first study concerned again a village in the Province of Kalinga: Aritonin. Although it is located in the same province as Luaya, and falls under the discretion of the same Consortium, the organizing process evolved very differently. Aritonin is located in a valley on the shore of the Chico river where the primary source of

livelihood is irrigated agriculture. Aritonin is a settler area. It used to be malaria-infested and hardly inhabited. After the Second World War things changed when people from mountainous areas throughout the Cordillera and other highland provinces came to the area. The soil turned out to be good, and especially after the introduction of high yielding rice varieties, harvests were abundant, attracting an increasing number of settlers. Many families use their original language at home, but the common language used is Ilokano. The *sitio* consists of three clusters of houses. The smallest cluster is more or less apart from the village. It consists of a community of Jehovah's Witnesses who largely refrain from *barangay* politics and development projects. The other two clusters roughly coincide with social networks differentiated by migration background, kinship, history and language. They have become two factions in *barangay* politics, competing over elections, projects and other resources.

The local Aritonin history of State-NGO relations and the People's Organizations stands in contrast to Luaya. Aritonin was not involved in the struggle against the Chico dams. There were several People's Organizations in Aritonin, organized by government agencies and churches. The Consortium NGOs worked with two of these, that were both located in the same cluster of the village. In the early 1990s, a People's Organization was formed under the guidance of the Cordillera People's Alliance, the CPA. This organization had implemented two projects: a paved area for drying rice *cum* basketball court, and a waiting shed. One of these was sponsored by a Consortium NGO and the other by a politician. In addition, there was a Women's Club that belonged to the Episcopal Church which set up a day-care centre with the support of a government agency and the CWNGO.

The ensuing organizing process differed especially in the way NGOs were fitted into local politics and into the expectations people had with regard to these NGOs. It turned out that relations with the government were concentrated in one cluster, while relations with the NGOs were mainly in the other. Between the two, mutual accusations went about regarding the monopolization and mishandling of projects. While the NGO cluster considered the *barangay* officials of the other cluster as corrupt, the *barangay* officials called the NGO cluster 'communist'. The president of the People's Organization in the NGO cluster used to be *barangay* captain himself and planned to run again for this position in the next election. An image emerged of Aritonin as an ideal-typical Philippine village organized around two factions where leaders' competition for power is strongly shaped by their dyadic political relations beyond the village (see Wolters 1983; Kerkvliet 1991: 8, n9; Sidel 1999). However, while the ideal-typical case portrays ongoing village feuds to be related to competing government-linked political factions, here we see that NGOs have been accorded a place in this game, as providing a 'new' channel to resources and contacts outside the village.

Two more cases

In the case of Aritonin, then, we are able to see how the relations between NGOs and People's Organizations gets shaped through the dynamics of two factions in the village. Reference to two other cases of the impact-study gives a further idea of the

diversity of relations that can emerge from local organizing processes. In one poor urban community where CWNGO had an ongoing functional literacy programme and assisted a rice lending co-operative, a different relation was found. It was a squatter community, which, despite several years of legal and political efforts with the help of some NGOs, had not been able to acquire permission to stay on the lot where their houses were built and thus to attain access to basic services like electricity and water. During the impact-study a deep disappointment, even anger, surfaced about the perceived failure of the NGOs to achieve this for them. While the NGOs defined their role as facilitating the squatters' organizing, the squatters had put their hopes in the NGOs, whom they considered as *political leaders* who had steered them into the squatter adventure and now failed to solve their problems. They felt misguided to the extent that they did not trust other NGO activities any longer. In this case, local perceptions of NGO-PO relations was one of trust, evolving into a relation of broken trust. This determined the way in which these poor urban squatters responded to new NGO activities.

In another community, villagers were involved in fulfilling a strong ambition to obtain recognition for rights to their ancestral lands, together with five other villages considered to be from the same *tribe*. This ambition was strengthened by recent legal changes that in themselves did not promise such recognition, but allowed people to imagine such possibilities at some future point in time. They had a large range of community activities and projects with NGOs of the Consortium, to the extent that some people felt that these activities competed with daily requirements to make a living. They took the opportunities of these projects for the immediate benefits they entailed. An additional motivation was that they wanted to "prove their good stewardship for the community" to add weight to their claim to the ancestral land. In this case, the organizing process with the NGOs was given meaning in a larger community project, defined by the tribal organization of the five communities. The irony was that the laws in which these villagers had put their hopes were vehemently opposed by the NGO Consortium.

NGOs and people's agency

Development intervenors have often been accused of creating their subjects by the labelling practices that are inherent to policy-making (Wood 1985; Escobar 1995). Interestingly, in the cases presented here, villagers are much more effective in creating the NGOs than the other way around. By fostering a certain representation of the NGO, and responding accordingly, they reshape the NGO and its interventions, in correspondence with this client-constructed image. In the case of Luaya, the NGO was not able to overcome the kinship-centred expectations and practices of the villagers. In Aritonin the NGOs were confronted with reluctance as soon as they stepped out of the role of an alternative government accorded to them by the villagers. In the squatter area the organizing process stopped when the relation with the NGO became one of broken trust, while the NGO was not even aware of the trust invested in them in the first place. We may conclude that the

'imagined' agency that people attribute to NGOs is an important element in shaping NGO interventions

Notwithstanding their diversity, the above cases testify to the overwhelming influence local actors have in shaping NGO intervention. The step-by-step organizing model propagated by the NGOs assumes that the NGOs have at their disposal room for manoeuvre to control this process. However, as we have seen in the cases presented, for many reasons organizing processes do not often happen according to the step-by-step organizing model. Furthermore, in cases where they do, this may not be the result of NGO's effective agency. There are many villages where organizing happens more or less in the NGO desired direction, and where the relationship between the NGOs and their clients in the communities is mutually considered positive and beneficial. In these cases, we can nonetheless not assume that the NGO has mustered the room for manoeuvre to control this process. Rather, it may be a (temporary) coincidence, a matter of interlocking projects that coincide.

Moreover, the manifestation of the organizing process may have entirely different meanings for the parties involved. This is, for example, the case in the village where the NGO project fitted in locally with the ambition of villagers to prove their stewardship in the framework of land laws that were politically opposed by the NGOs. In this case the organizing process moved on as planned by the NGOs, but acquired a different symbolic meaning making it unlikely that the organizing process would eventually result in the goal set by the NGOs. We may thus safely conclude that NGOs in most cases lack the room for manoeuvre to implement the step-by-step organizing model. This leaves one more question to be asked for this chapter namely: if not organize, what does the model do and why do the NGOs adhere to it?

The social life of policy models

At the start of this chapter I elaborated the step-by-step organizing model as a policy projecting a linear road towards a given objective. The cases subsequently brought out how NGOs generally lack the room for manoeuvre to realize their goal. We should not jump to the conclusion from this observation that these policy models are therefore not worth considering for analysis. It remains important to critically look at the model, if only because development practices without policies are unthinkable and therefore should continue to be an important focus for analysis (van Dusseldorp 1995: 5). However, instead of looking at the models for what they proclaim to be, I think we should keep our minds open as to what they mean. Just as one can speak of the social life of interventions, we may have to search for the social life of policy models to complete the exploration of the dynamics of the development intervention.

When a policy model doesn't do what it is supposed to do, we cannot simply conclude that it is a mistake or a brainchild of leaders who are alienated from the field of implementation. Let us instead ask what it *does in practice* (see Hilhorst and van Leeuwen, 2000). As Colebatch notes, the perception "that policy consists of the pursuit of known goals is deeply rooted in the 'common-sense' understanding of the

world, and tends to be assumed rather than analysed" (Colebatch 1998: 54). This author contends that policy may be for very different things, for example to establish routine, to make sense of action or to create order in policy fields. These 'other' meanings of policy are unstated.

Before moving into this discussion I want to make clear that I do not believe that every aspect of policy is fully intentional in the sense that every policy turn can start on a new blank page. Implementation practices are patterned through historically grown and discursively framed social constructions of actors, and so are policy practices. The emphasis on formal organizing by NGOs, for example, is probably an effect of the way organizing practices in the NGO and the National Democratic movement are patterned. The NGOs, as explained in chapter 1, hinge on the use of three major discourses: political, development and indigenous. Both the Marxist and development discourses are based on modernity and reinforce the adoption of modern, rational organizations (Long 1992). In the Philippines, bureaucratic culture is moreover characterized by hierarchy, formality and a high regard for organizational positions. This further strengthens patterns of formal organizing. Given these features of organizations within NGOs, and in other Philippines settings that have been introduced into villages already, it is hard to see how NGOs will side-step this. Even though a counter-discourse based on indigenous forms of organizing and decision-making is sometimes formulated, it seldom leads to changing practice.

Who believes in the model?

When NGO actors explained their work to me in general terms, they often referred to the step-by-step organizing model. However, as soon as the conversation turned to actual cases this model disappeared completely out of view. Then the organizing appeared as highly personalized and constituted by social relations and everyday politicking, and the same conclusion can be drawn from the cases of Luaya and Aritonin. Interestingly, even management actors who hardly ever went to the field themselves, displayed this difference between theory and practical knowledge of local dynamics. In the office of NGOs, everyday stories regarding organizing often centre around the whereabouts of local peoples (see also chapter 7). As a result, even the Baguio-based management of the CWNGO knows many details of the lives of the women involved: the life events of birth, marriage, migration, disease and death, as well as the latest intrigues from the villages. Bits and pieces of information could be as everyday as the following conversation:

CWNGO manager: "Have you seen *Manang* Endena (a woman living in a tiny Mountain Province village), I heard she has new teeth?"

Local organizer: "Yes, they look good, her daughter bought them for her, she works in Taiwan".

This conversation also included a matter of fact understanding of the arena of development interventions. One of the managers could, for example, comment about an incident involving a women's PO leader: "that is to be expected, she is after all related to the provincial governor's wife". The interest in personal information and

local politicking was raised in relevance to the organizing, but it also contains an element of sheer pleasure in juicy or funny details. Some local people or situations are subject to continuing stories as if they are soap operas. The contrast between the intimate knowledge of actual village organizing processes and the idealistic or normative way in which NGO actors talked about the step-by-step organizing model amazed me. At some point, I had the idea that the model only had a formal life. In meetings of the NGO it was used to report on organizing processes, even though all the cases were always presented as exceptions. I wondered if there was any one who seriously believed in the possibility that the model could be achieved in practice. I slowly came to realize, however, that most people in the NGO did.

The way in which NGO staff members dealt with the step-by-step organizing model in relation to everyday organizing displayed a certain diversity. During my entire fieldwork, I only met one staff member in the NGO Consortium who doggedly tried to implement the model in practice, and he was met with scorn by his colleagues for being so 'mechanistic'. On the other hand, only a few staff members distanced themselves from the model, and would in private admit they did not believe it helped them in their work. Some of them hinted that they did not grasp what the purpose was of the organizing, or how their everyday work could contribute to the women's movement and the organizational patterns envisaged by the NGO. The majority, however, were well capable of accommodating to both realities. The management of the NGO, when asked, immediately agreed that the 'step-by-step' organizing did not work as such in practice. Nevertheless, they continued to provide guidelines on how to do it, and expected staff to report according to this model.

That the adherence to the step-by-step organizing model was more than perfunctory became clear in 1994 when the NGO consortium went through a so-called 'rectification' campaign. Until then the organizing model seemed a tool in the back of peoples' minds with little direct relevance for everyday work. During the evaluations, the NGOs realized that the step-by-step approach had not worked, and that they had little control over the People's Organizations (see chapter 3). This observation did not lead to a reconsideration of the model in accordance with the observed dynamics in the localities. Instead, it was concluded that the approach had not been properly implemented. The step-by-step organizing model was reinvigorated and the deployment of staff, co-ordination of NGOs and a more limited number of villages were adjusted towards improving the step-by-step organizing approach. This raises the question of what the meaning is of this model for the NGOs.

The step-by-step organizing model revisited

In the *villages*, the step-by-step organizing does not often happen as foreseen by NGOs, but it is nonetheless not without effects. The model in particular provides the NGO organizers with an anchor that they can fall back on when faced with decisions or dilemmas in organizing practice (see also Schmiemann 2000). Even though the

model may not adequately project their actions for the future, it helps them to establish certain routines and standard operation procedures to facilitate everyday practice. As Colebatch (1998: 46) says: "organization is about routinization - developing known and predictable ways of dealing with events". NGO staff members working in the field face many unexpected ambiguities and they are alone in responding to them. The model in these cases provides them with a guideline to act upon. In those villages where NGOs have a relatively large room for manoeuvre, this can have substantial implications, for example in the case of Luaya where NGO officers effectively thwarted the Women's Organization.

In the *NGO offices*, I found that the step-by-step organizing model performs three main functions: A discursive, political and symbolic function. Firstly, the organizing model provides a common official NGO language for making sense of organizing practices. In everyday exchanges, staff members mainly talked about their work through story-telling and anecdotes. In meetings where the staff had to give a concise overall report, the model provided a language for accounting about the organizing. It also provided a basis for comparison and compilation. A provincial organizer would report, for example, during a meeting that she was working with: "18 Women's Organizations, 10 of which are at the stage of core-group formation, 5 have completed their basic leadership training and 2 have formed their committees". As soon as organizers were providing details on a case, these always turned out to be exceptional when compared with the model. However, even if every single case turns out to be exceptional, the model still provides the language in which they can be expressed.

Secondly, the model serves the purpose of an implicit contract, as 'terms of reference', between NGOs of the Consortium. In cases where two NGOs work in the same community, and disagree on the implementation of a project, the argument that "the organization is not yet ready" can decide discussions and legitimizes decisions like no other. As we will see in the next chapter, this plays an important role in accountability processes. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the model has a symbolic meaning in providing a basis for the belief of NGO actors in their final goal. The National Democratic NGO Consortium aims to build a regional social movement, and eventually to accomplish a social revolution. This implies a future moment of completion. Such a distinct project can not be imagined without the belief that it is possible to work systematically towards this goal. This last symbolic meaning I find especially important, because it is the only one that explains why the NGOs adhere to this particular model without discussing possible alternatives that are closer to the everyday experiences of organizing. If I am right, this means that the seemingly highly rational and systematic planning model turns out to have a primarily symbolic function for the NGO actors themselves.

This chapter started with elaborating the step-by-step organizing model, then explored the room for manoeuvre of NGOs in organizing processes in the villages and finally set out to discover the 'other' meanings of the organizing model. As a final remark to conclude the chapter, I want to underline that analysing this model, which is officially meant to guide organizing in the villages, takes us away from these localities into the organizations of the NGOs. The organizing model turns out

to be of limited significance in the villages. It is important in guiding NGO actors in day-to-day decisions, but has little bearing on the long-term prospects of organizing. At the same time, the model turns out to be of utmost importance for the organizations of the NGOs. It provides a language which is evoked in meetings within the NGOs, is a political device in regulating relations between NGOs, and has a symbolic meaning in underpinning the belief in the possibilities of a social revolution. Hence, the step-by-step organizing model may be more significant for processes within NGOs, than for the local interventions it was designed for. This points to an interesting phenomenon, namely that NGO actors manage particular domains of operation through strategies and practices that are seemingly directed to one of their other fields of action. This phenomenon, as will be seen in the remaining chapters of this thesis, is typical of everyday politics in NGOs.

Notes

¹ *Barangay* is the smallest political administrative unit in the Philippine government system, governed by an elected *barangay* council, headed by an, -also elected-, *barangay* captain.

² I spent a total of three months in the village in the first half of 1996, divided over four periods of fieldwork. In addition, I made a return visit of several days to the area in January 1999.

³ A *sitio* is a subdivision of a *barangay*, which is the smallest political administrative unit in the Philippine government system. Luaya belongs to the *barangay* of Luaya, which consists of eight *sitios*, with four of them on-shore and four off-shore. They are separated by distances of a more or less 20 minute hike.

⁴ More likely than not, villages have already been touched by modern ways of organizing introduced by other development intervenors by the time an NGO arrives in the area.



6

Whose Reality Counts: Issues of NGO Accountability

One of the hottest topics for discussion among NGO practitioners and observers today concerns the issue of accountability. As intermediary organizations that provide development for poor and otherwise marginalized people, NGOs must answer for the quality and impact of their work in a range of different arenas. To whom NGOs are accountable is one of the major questions raised. As the debate goes, governments are (in principle) accountable to their voters, private companies to their shareholders and the market, but NGOs risk operating in an accountability void. The worries are that NGOs are, in practice, either not accountable or only accountable to their funding agencies.¹ The problem with these discussions, I contend, is that they often focus on a rather narrow view of accountability and are far from clear on what constitutes accountability in practice.

In this chapter I seek to unravel the notion of accountability and explore NGO practices. Edwards and Hulme (1996: 8) define the concept as “the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority (or authorities) and are held responsible for their actions”. Although this definition will be closely scrutinized later in the chapter, I introduce it here because it clearly brings out three elements of accountability. First, accountability is *relational*, since one party (the NGO) is accountable to another party (the stakeholders or authorities). Secondly, there is an element of control and *legitimation*. As Brett (1993) points out, accountability can only be effective if the stakeholder has an exit option or/and a voice to influence the NGO. Thirdly, there is the account: the report, story, calculation or compilation that presents the performance to be accounted for. Remarkably, discussions on NGO accountability have concentrated mainly on the

first two elements, i.e. on the questions of the nature and influence of the stakeholders that NGOs have to answer to. Little, in contrast, has been said about the accounts that form the substance of the accountability process. As I argue, this is an important omission. During accountability processes, the project that needs to be accounted for never lies on the table as such, but is represented by a particular account. NGO projects have, so to speak, multiple lives. They acquire additional realities beyond the locale where they are implemented as *representations* in areas of accountability. In these areas, accounts become devices to make sense of the project. Accountability is therefore not just a process of legitimating action, but also a process of *attributing meaning* to NGOs.

In this study I define accountability as a process in which different actors negotiate the meaning and legitimacy of NGO activities. I start this chapter with two different pedigrees of understanding accountability. One starts with Max Weber and may be called 'rational accountability', the other starts with Emile Durkheim and concerns 'moral accountability'. The two are associated with a number of contrasting features, depicting different relations between the elements of actors, meaning and legitimacy. This will be elaborated by discussing more recent proponents of these lines of thought, namely Foucault and Garfinkel. After analytically separating the two modes of accountability I will argue that they are empirically intertwined in many different ways.

If we want to know about accountability, we have to look at the practices of how reports and other accounts are constructed, presented, received and responded to. The second part of this chapter therefore consists of a case study of an accountability process in the NGO Consortium of the Cordillera. The first accountability relations that normally spring to mind are those between NGOs and their funding-agencies, and NGOs and their beneficiaries respectively. This case, however, deals primarily with the accountability of NGOs to their stakeholders in a larger NGO Consortium. The case concerns a weaving project for women that involved two NGOs who are both affiliated and accountable to this Consortium. When conflict occurred, the case was brought to the judgement of a gathering of this NGO network. As I will show, the way the NGO accounts were composed and sustained tells us more about discursive practices and power processes in the arenas of accountability than at the locus of implementation. What actually happened in the village had little bearing on the accountability process. This has vast implications for certain conceptions that we have come to take for granted *vis-à-vis* accountability and transparency. This leads me to elaborate an alternative actor-oriented view of accountability starting with a notion of multiple accountabilities.

Rational and moral modes of accountability

The term accountability is associated with rational organization. It is reminiscent of Max Weber's characterization of Western bureaucracies in which responsibilities and authorities are clearly defined and ordered, and practices and decisions accurately

reflected in written documentation. The above definition of accountability as the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority and are held responsible for their actions is in line with this rational approach. It presupposes a clear division between the authorities and the accountable actor and assumes that accountability takes place through formal reporting mechanisms. People and organizations work according to certain procedures and are allotted particular tasks to which they have to respond. As Morgan (1986) points out, from this line of thinking organizations appear as machines. Accountability may be considered the device to ensure that different parts of the machine function properly.

However, there are also modes of accountability that can be traced back to another of the 'founding fathers' of sociology, namely Emile Durkheim. Durkheim conceived of modern societies characterized by advanced divisions of labour as bound together through organic solidarity. In his view, in order to function well (and not to fall into a state of anomy) societies force individuals to surrender to shared norms and values and to fulfil their part in the division of labour on the basis of a '*moral contract*'. Individuals breaching this moral contract are sanctioned in different ways, some of them institutionalized in law, others operating through social mechanisms of exclusion and correction. I suggest labelling this idea of being responsive on the basis of moral obligations as moral accountability. Alternatively it may be called everyday accountability, since it permeates and operates through everyday social life.

Before elaborating on the linkages between these modes of accountability in practice, let me complete the images they evoke, based on contrasting features that appear in writings about accountability, although not usually under these headings of rational versus moral accountability. Rational accountability is associated with Western bureaucracy and formal procedures, whereby reports are produced by a prescribed means. It is hierarchical in a top-down fashion and must lead to transparency. In order to deliver transparency, the accountability process itself should not distort the accounts. Accountability stands apart from everyday practices. As Michael Power has stated for audits, the purpose of accountability is to produce trust from mistrust. In order to succeed in this operation the credibility of the audit has to be taken for granted. "By the same token that the audit has to visibilize in order to produce trust, the audit and auditor themselves thus have to remain invisible" (Power 1994: 304-6). The means of accountability are therefore treated "as if they speak for themselves, and are thus delegated to the context" (Munro 1996: 3).

Moral accountability contrasts with rational accountability on all these points, partly as the other half of a number of dichotomies, partly as a range of contrasting images. Moral accountability is mainly located in the non-West and imagined as primarily cultural. It can be both horizontal, within social groups, and hierarchical. However, it is not so much associated with the higher authorities in unequal social relations, but is typically the accountability of 'little people': those in the subordinate positions. It concerns the informal means by which leaders are forced to be responsive to their followers or patrons to their clients. Jonathan Fox, for example, directs our gaze to informal practices of accountability in regional peasant organizations in Mexico (Fox 1992). He points out that followers find parallel

channels to make their leaders responsive outside of the formal mechanisms of representation. Anthropological literature abounds with cases where people get rid of unwanted leaders or patrons by creative informal practices, ranging from plain violence, ingenuous conspiracies, to evoking the assistance of supra-natural powers.

Moral accountability, in the heritage of Durkheim, can be highly formalized and institutionalized in rituals or common law practices through which social groups deal with offending group members. However, in organizations it is more associated with informal ways of accounting. What the report and the statistical record are for rational accountability, stories, ironic remarks and gossip are for moral accountability. Unlike rational accountability, processes of moral accountability are integrated into everyday life and embedded in organizational culture. In a more obvious way than with rational accountability it is an extension of everyday power games. Moral accountability is not transparent, but its non-transparency cannot be captured by one single concept either. Instead of transparent, moral accountability processes can be radiating, prismatic or obscure. It can be portrayed as exemplary, a shining phenomenon of respectable individuals or organizations that respond to their moral obligations. In other cases, it can be considered prismatic: distorting incoming insights by cultural biases. Finally it is associated with opaqueness, with the muddy workings of rumours, slander and vengeful acts, often in the realm of illegality. This association has little to do with the noble idea of pressuring people to fulfil their moral obligations, but with competition and dirty politics. Moral or everyday accountability thus has many faces.

Accountability as a sense making exercise

In the introduction I mentioned three elements of accountability: as a relation between the authority and the accountable organization, as an activity to attribute meaning and as a device for legitimation. The linkages between these elements vary in the different modes of accountability. Here, I shall discuss the work of two recent proponents of rational and moral accountability, Michel Foucault and Harold Garfinkel.

Rational accountability is considered an exercise for making everyday organizational performance visible in order to control it from a distance. The parallel with practices of surveillance and discipline as analysed by Michel Foucault is apparent. Surveillance in his work is symbolized by the Panopticum of Bentham, an annular institution built around a tower that is so designed that subjects are separated from each other by petition walls but are visible for the supervisor in the tower. Because those in the cells of the Panopticum can never tell when the supervisor (who is invisible to them) looks at them, they are forced to discipline their actions the whole day round (Foucault 1995/1975: 200-209). Rational accountability works as such a Panopticum: it concentrates information about segregated parts of organizational performance in the hands of an authority. As in the Panopticum, discipline in the eyes of Foucault is not just effected by surveillance. It is the result of

a double bind. On the one hand, authority and discretion is generated by the visibility of surveillance. On the other, the individualized objects of visibility assume responsibility for the constraints of power and make them play upon themselves. "This is a 'capillary form' of power, a power which 'reaches into the very grain of individuals', a 'regime that is exercised *within* the social body rather than *from above* it' " (Foucault 1980; cited in Clegg 1998: 31). This means that disciplining is partially effected because individualized subjects absorb and embrace the "values of utility" they have for an organization (Roberts 1996: 47). It is discursive practice in which people, by acting upon this absorbed 'knowledge', make it become true. Although individuals in this view act in accordance with a *sense* of what an organization is and wants, they are not attributed agency in interpreting the meaning of the organization nor in the social relations to negotiate this meaning.

An alternative line of thinking more associated with everyday informal forms of accountability is found in the work of Garfinkel's ethno-methodology. Garfinkel was concerned with the question of how social relations are constituted in groups through creating identities, sanctioning processes and ultimately by delineating who belongs and who does not, who is included or excluded from membership. What is interesting about his approach is the emphasis he places on the importance of sense making in everyday accountability. The term ethno-methodology refers to the human capacity to give accounts, in the sense of stories, explanations and reasons for conduct. It is the kind of accountability that is embedded in everyday activities and is an "endless, ongoing, contingent accomplishment" (Garfinkel 1967: 1). Garfinkel claims that any setting

"organizes its activities to make its properties as an organized environment of practical activities detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analyzable - in short accountable" (*ibid.*: 33).

According to ethno-methodology, the relationship between account and the substance it evokes is contingent. The contingency of accounts often remains hidden, because a close correspondence to the substance is assumed, and because they tend to be legitimized by appealing to either reason, as a universal value, or nature (*cf.* Douglas 1987). However, at most there is a loose connection, shaped in a particular context, so that accounts are in a sense 'indifferent' to what they describe. Yet, it is only through accounts that phenomena are known. It is, therefore, through the production and interpretation of accounts that "members of a society create and enact the circumstances in which, through their actions, they find themselves" (Heritage 1984: 134).

In the work of Garfinkel, people in order to belong have to comply with understandings prevalent in their social setting. This was pointedly demonstrated through Garfinkel's so-called 'breaching experiments'. These experiments showed that people who fell out of line, for instance by acting for fifteen minutes in their homes as if they were boarders instead of family members, provoked strong rejection (Garfinkel 1967: 47-49). In ethno-methodology, the creation of accounts is a group endeavour and members of the same group have methods by which they sanction

other members' conduct. We could say that Garfinkel seeks to explore the working of moral or everyday accountability in particular settings. People are followed in their ability to account for social practices within the commonsensical body of knowledge prevailing in their group.

These two approaches both point to the importance of sense making for accountability, but in two different ways. For Foucault sense making happens as a result of discursive disciplining, whereas for Garfinkel it stems from group socializing (Roberts 1996). John Roberts argues that both processes work simultaneously in organizations.

“Those whom an individual works alongside or encounters elsewhere in the organization become the network through which an individual shares and builds a common understanding of organizational experience. The unsurveilled spaces of organizational life - corridors and toilets, chats before and after meetings, lunchbreaks and outings - all become the contexts for an alternative form of accountability *in which the sense of events is negotiated*” [italics added] (Roberts 1996: 49).

Roberts views accountability as a process that involves the “institutionalized social practices through which we reflect upon the conditions and consequences of our actions and relationships” (*ibid.*: 54). He stipulates that in accountability processes socializing and disciplining forms of accountability are interwoven and mutually dependent upon each other. What I find problematic in his analysis, however, is that he locates sanctions only in formal and hierarchical forms of accountability, and juxtaposes this with lateral forms of accountability that are based on solidarity and the construction of a sense of self in organizations. Instead I would argue that both rational and moral accountability combine elements of disciplining and sense making. To elaborate this point, let me discuss the process of rational accountability, in particular the premise that it is transparent and stands apart from everyday organizational practice.

Shattering the dream of transparency²

As I stipulated above, rational accountability is based on the idea that accountability produces transparency. In order to make organizational practice visible, the means of accountability remain invisible in the sense that they stand apart from everyday organizational practice. Accountability means to be *impersonal*, it eliminates the personal by insulating the accountability process from everyday politics and cultural practices. Not only is there an assumption that reports and other paraphernalia of accountability can be accurate reflections of the activities reported on; indeed there is a twin assumption that the requirements and act of accountability do not interfere with the practices under scrutiny. Producing accounts is supposed to be a neutral, technical job. Several authors have tripped up this ideal notion. They have demonstrated that accountability processes invade and constitute everyday

organizational life, and everyday practices in their turn invade and constitute accountability processes. As I argue, this notion shatters the dream of transparency.

Let me first briefly elaborate how the means of rational accountability constitute organizational relations and practice. The means of accounting, such as formats for reporting, shape *organizational relations* because they open up spaces of discretion and allow evaluation and comparison of individuals and organizations. Authority gets constituted through the possibility of control: because of the means of accountability the authority avails of the discretion, insights and pro-active attitudes inscribed in him/her (Law 1996). The introduction of computer formats and the use of e-mail for reporting can serve as an illustration of the point. The availability of electronic communication has brought funding agencies much closer in time and space to NGOs. This has led to a range of new accountability demands and leaves NGOs with fewer excuses for untimely or incomplete reporting. E-mail and the use of e-mail forms for project applications, planning and monitoring have provided such illusions of control that representatives of funding agencies may even start to take on the identity of 'proximate managers', instead of distant suppliers of funds as they used to be.

The idea that the technological means of accountability constitute *organizational practice* is also no stranger to development practitioners. Accountability requirements and formats elicit particular accounts and invite a certain ordering of activities within development NGOs. Intrinsic to accounting mechanisms are particular rationales. Those aspects that are/can be measured, such as particular forms of efficiency, acquire priority over aspects that fall outside the scope of accounting, such as localized standards of effectiveness (Gasper 1998). Consequently, people will start to act towards the requirements embedded in the means of accounting. It is not just that NGO actors adapt to accountability requirements; these requirements 'discipline' the actors because they provide frames of making sense of NGO realities. To illustrate this point I recall the organizing model of the NGO Consortium in the Cordillera. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this policy model started to shape how actors read organizing practices in the villages, at least it provided an alternative reality to everyday understandings of organizing. The application of particular accountability models or techniques not only generates standards but also "enhances certain ways of perceiving and assessing economic or organizational life" (Miller 1994: 2-5). Socializing processes of sense making are thus permeated by these formal procedures.

Conversely, everyday organizational relations, practices and discourses also constitute formal accountability procedures. Reports, statistics and other accounts are based on information provided by social actors that already reflects their interpretation and is phrased in terms of the discursive repertoire of these actors. At the other end of the accountability process, actors read, interpret and make sense of the accounts within their own life world and rationalities. Far from being impersonal, the accountability procedure is thus filled in with social organizational life. This renders the accountability process essentially social. As Munro says: "Modes of accounting are always interdependent. Conversation can never be separated of, and

delimited from other accounting media. Each technology or media draws on and sustains the other" (Munro 1996: 9).

Before presenting a case-study that substantiates the notion of accountability as a social process, let me emphasize that this notion is geographically neutral. I do not want to condone the unpleasant position that portrays rational organizations as the Western norm, with cultural and informal organizations as its deviant non-Western counterpart. We should not derive from the forceful way in which the idea of Western rationality is advocated in development discussions, the expectation that organizations in 'the West' (whatever that may be) actually operate according to this image in real life. Michael Herzfeld unmasks modern bureaucracies as no more rational and no less symbolic than non-Western organizations. Accountability in Western bureaucracy, he finds, is "a socially produced, culturally saturated amalgam of ideas about person, presence, and polity. Despite its claims to a universal rationality, its meanings are culturally specific, and its operation is constrained by the ways in which its operators and clients interpret its actions" (Herzfeld 1992: 47). Exit transparency.

The case of the BPO women's weaving project

This case aims to demonstrate how accounts are constructed and find legitimation in accountability processes. This is most clear in cases where conflicts occur and the composition of accounts becomes a controversy. This happened in the project discussed here. The case concerns a weaving project of 19 women, in the agricultural village of Binasan in Mountain Province. The village has around 90 households. The participants of the project have a loom in their houses. They weave blankets and fine cloth that is made into objects like blankets, backpacks, hats, and wallets. These are sold through the offices of supportive NGOs. The participants form the Women's Committee of the Binasan People's Organization. This organization is supported by two NGOs, both belonging to the NGO Consortium in the Cordillera. One of them is the Cordillera Women NGO (CWNGO) that we have encountered in previous chapters. The other is the Mountainous Development NGO (MOUNT), which specializes in programmes for sustainable agriculture. Unlike CWNGO, which is a region wide organization, MOUNT mainly works in Mountain Province. Its office is just one hour away from the village of Binasan. The case centres around a conflict over matters of interpretation and coordination that built up between these two NGOs in the course of the project and reached a climax in 1994.

The NGO Consortium that CWNGO and MOUNT belong to consists of 12 organizations. The NGO network is organized in a hierarchical fashion, which means that the Consortium prevails over the member NGOs. The NGOs, in other words, are accountable to the coordinators of the Consortium. As elaborated in the last chapter, the Consortium works according to the step-by-step organizing model that stipulates that People's Organizations should follow a trajectory of organization building, training, and socio-economic activities. They are not supposed to proceed to a next

step until 'ready' in the eyes of the NGO staff members. The principle of step-by-step organizing is both an ideological cornerstone of the Consortium as well as a tool for the management, planning and evaluation of NGO activities. Although the principle has always been a leading notion of the NGO network, it has been given different priority throughout the years. The weaving project started at a time when the model had been watered down considerably in everyday NGO practice. However, at the time that the conflict between MOUNT and CWNGO erupted it had just been revived as part of a political campaign that wanted to bring NGOs back to their 'basics'. As we shall see, this is an important detail for understanding the dynamics of the accountability process around the conflict.

I studied this project as part of a CWNGO-initiated impact study with a team composed of staff members of the two NGOs. The study lasted one week. It turned into an extended case study. I interviewed the stakeholders in the NGOs, was able to follow the controversy for some time, and to trace its beginnings through reports, letters and interviews. The process I uncovered this way stretched over a period of three years. I will first present a history of events of the project, the People's Organizations and the NGOs. After that, I will analyse two accountability interfaces: the interface between the NGOs and their clients in the village, and that between the various NGOs in the Consortium.

History of the Binasan People's Organization and the NGOs

The Binasan People's Organization (BPO) was formed in 1989. It was the initiative of one of the villagers, *Manong Roy*. *Manong Roy* used to work for an NGO, so he knew what he was doing. He went through the formation steps of drafting a constitution and forming organizational committees. One of the committees of the BPO was the Women's Committee. The women already had an Episcopal Church Women's organization that dated back before BPO. Once BPO was formed this organization was not abolished, but assumed a second identity as the BPO Women's Committee. The leader of the committee was *Manang Mary*. The BPO was then launched with a big event. A large number of government and non-government organizations were invited for the launching, which made BPO from the very start a well-known People's Organization in Mountain Province. As it turned out this considerably facilitated the accessing of funds and other resources of different organizations.

After the BPO had been underway for more than a year, *Manong Roy* requested the assistance of the Mountainous Development NGO (MOUNT). MOUNT did some consultation with the members, after which it was decided that the Women's Committee should have an income-generating project. A social analysis done with the BPO had shown that lack of cash was a major problem in the livelihoods of people, which was especially felt by the women. An evaluation report of MOUNT looking back on this period cites an additional reason why the BPO embarked on such an income-generating project. There had been military-ignited rumours that BPO had connections to the New Peoples' Army (NPA). The military started to monitor the organization and harass its active members. According to the report:

"In 1991, the gravity of the red scare had succeeded in isolating BPO members from the mainstream of the community. Such experiences gave the PO the lesson that a strong community solidarity has to be built-up for them to be able to pursue their goals and for their tribe not to be divided again. Based on this insight they made a strong resolution to strengthen their organization through membership expansion at every opportunity - through education, organizing work and project implementation." (unpublished MOUNT document)

This means that the project had two objectives: it was meant to generate income for the members of the Women's Committee, but at the same time MOUNT wanted it to be instrumental for the organizing process of the BPO as a whole.

The Women's Committee initially consisted of seven women, under the leadership of *Manang* Mary. They decided to have a weaving project. For the patterns and colours the women could rely on generations of experience, since Mountain Province has a long and famous tradition of backstrap weaving. Present-day weaving is, however, done on looms. *Manang* Mary was familiar with this technique, because she had been an industrial weaver for several years. Following her specifications, a carpenter was able to construct a loom that the husbands of the other participating women could use as a model to reproduce. The women thus had the technical expertise required for the project, what they needed was money for the materials to make the looms and to buy thread. In consultation with MOUNT, the women decided to approach CWNGO for support.

The project takes off

In April 1992, during the regional indigenous celebration of Cordillera Day (see chapter 1), *Manang* Mary talked to Minda, who was the project co-ordinator of CWNGO. Minda was interested in the women's idea and invited them to submit a proposal. One month later, Minda and another CWNGO staff member came to Mountain Province. They first discussed the project with MOUNT and then proceeded to the village to talk with the women. The discussions were apparently satisfactory and without further ado the project was approved. *Manang* Mary and some other women travelled to Baguio to receive the first payment of funds and, with the help of a CWNGO staff member, went to buy assorted threads and other project items.

This release of money by CWNGO was the beginning of a controversy between the two NGOs. MOUNT wrote a letter to protest against the way CWNGO had handled the project. Their objections were threefold. Firstly, MOUNT regretted not having been consulted before the approval of the project. CWNGO apologized for this and assured MOUNT in a letter that "this will definitely be a joint project since this is basically your area and the women belong to the bigger organization". Secondly, MOUNT insisted that a feasibility study should have been undertaken prior to the project. According to the director of MOUNT, a woman named Fay, such a study was necessary to "build up their [the women's] critical thinking and

analysing ability". Minda, on the other hand, claimed that CWNGO had approved the project on the assumption that BPO was sufficiently "empowered to be capable of handling its own affairs". It was agreed that a feasibility study was still to be conducted as part of an interim evaluation. Finally, MOUNT told CWNGO that they should have consulted with the Executive Committee of the BPO instead of dealing directly with the Women's Committee. This point revealed a difference in attitude of the two NGOs regarding this project that was not going to be resolved. According to MOUNT, the project belonged to the Executive Committee of the BPO, on which only one of the women was represented. On the other hand, CWNGO saw the need to co-ordinate but considered the project primarily an activity of the women. During the research it turned out that this difference was reproduced in the village. The women weavers considered the project obviously theirs. They thought of the BPO Executive Committee as a group to consult with. The Executive Committee, on the other hand, held on to the idea that the project ultimately fell under their discretion. The differences were clear from the way the two groups referred to the project and from the different issues they raised. The Executive Committee, for example, complained that the women did not submit regular (written!) reports on the project. The women, on the other hand, assumed they did not need to report, and normally would only seek consultation when problems emerged.

In the meantime, the project went ahead with the seven women participants. Soon after they started a Canadian visitor of the NGO Consortium came to the area. This person was able to place some orders to be sent to Canada. This was a boost for the project. It expanded their marketing which mainly depended on outlets in the NGO offices. Because of the high initial costs of the project, money soon ran out. In October, some of the BPO women presented themselves at Baguio's CWNGO office with a new shopping list. They put Minda in a difficult position. She realized she had to co-ordinate with MOUNT, but could not contact their office because Mountain Province has no telephone system. Yet the women were right there in the office and it was obvious that the items they requested were needed to proceed with their activity. Minda decided to let the interest of the women prevail. She gave the money and purchases were made so that the women could continue their weaving. As a result, the second release of money was again done without prior consultation with MOUNT.

The project expands and inter-agency problems escalate

This time, Fay, the MOUNT director was furious. Again CWNGO had not consulted her and besides had released money before the agreed-upon feasibility study was conducted. She wrote an angry letter to CWNGO's director. The letter hinted at problems with the project: "misunderstanding among women and questions raised relating to the project", and reminded CWNGO that BPO is MOUNT's concern: "Whatever problems and gains in the weaving project of the women will have a bearing on the organization which will definitely affect the development work of our programme in the area".

The conflict was not resolved. For reasons unclear, the organizations did not get around to meeting and sorting out their problems. Instead, they stopped communicating about the project. When MOUNT conducted an evaluation of the programme it did not involve or interview CWNGO-actors. As Fay later commented: "This was between us and the people". Similarly, when CWNGO wanted to include Binasan in its impact study, Fay initially objected and only in a second instance did she reluctantly agree to have her staff members participate in the study. Instead, they continued to deal with the project separately. Both agencies continued to sell weaving products from their offices. The regional staff of CWNGO came occasionally to check the audits of the project. The Mountain Province based staff members of CWNGO also regularly visited the area. They gave the women training (a basic women's situationer and leadership training) and involved them in their provincial activities. MOUNT continued to relate with the project as part of their organizing work with the Binasan People's Organization.

Six months after the project had started, MOUNT noticed some tension in the community as a result of the project. It raised *imon*, jealousy, which was exacerbated by the fact that there were only seven participants. This was discussed with the women who agreed to expand. In the course of one year the project grew from 7 to 19 participants. Around the time that this problem came up, another group of international visitors came to the area. They offered to bring in additional funding and marketing channels for the project. At this point, MOUNT intervened. They advised the Executive Committee of BPO to decline the opportunity, and so they did. In an evaluation report of August 1993 MOUNT legitimated this as follows:

"Had it not been for the intervention of the BPO-EC as a body (one of whom was a member of the weaving group), the women's group would not have resolved their problem, disregarded all existing issues about their project and attended to getting the promised funds."

The conflict is brought to the Consortium

In mid-1994, the Binasan weaving project was brought up in an important assessment meeting of the NGO Consortium concerned with socio-economic work. Just before this meeting, the impact study was conducted by staff members of the two NGOs and myself. During the study it was revealed that the impact, from the point of view of the 19 participants, was overwhelmingly positive. The project had brought the women a substantial income and had increased their room for manoeuvre to manage many tasks. If, for example, a child was ill, and the mother had to stay in the house to take care of it, she could use the time to weave and the generated money to pay somebody else to take care of her garden in the meantime. The management of the project seemed to run smoothly. The problems of the previous year were overcome according to both the participants and the members of the Executive Committee of the Binasan People's Organization. Although the project went well, the villagers made it clear they needed continuing support from the NGOs, especially with the marketing of their products. The marketing had become

problematic. Most products were left in consignment with NGO offices and sales lagged considerably behind production. They needed the NGOs to help them devise and implement strategies to improve this situation. Unfortunately, however, the NGOs were occupied with their own problems.

Soon after the impact study, the project was discussed in the NGO Consortium. At this meeting Fay charged that CWNGO had mishandled the project. Although MOUNT shared the opinion that the project was presently doing well, it insisted that the involvement of CWNGO had created problems which would have ruined the project if not for the intervention of MOUNT. Her account emphasized the problems the project had encountered in the community. She stressed these problems would have been avoided if only CWNGO had done a feasibility study and had followed the arrangement of the co-ordination by consulting both MOUNT and the Executive Committee of the Binasan People's Organization. After the whole history of the project was spelled out during the Consortium meeting, the participants agreed that CWNGO was to blame for the problems. The Consortium adopted the position that the project was problematic. This meant that the project from thereon was always labelled as a problem case. It was considered that this project was an example *par excellence* of bad co-ordination between NGOs and moreover that this situation was due to CWNGO. The project co-ordinator of CWNGO who was present at the meeting told me later that the criticism was so harsh that she had not seen a chance to defend CWNGO. She had simply taken on the blame and apologized.

NGO accountability

The local village organization that implements a project is accountable to the supporting NGO, at least in financial terms. In the course of the project CWNGO had trained the women in bookkeeping and went several times to the village in order to check the financial accounts of the weavers' group. But how about the accountability of the NGOs with regard to the villagers? NGOs obtain funding in order to provide services to People's Organizations and should therefore be accountable to their clients. In the weaving project, there were no formal accountability procedures in which the two NGOs had to legitimate their activities *vis-à-vis* the villagers. Does that mean there was no accountability? Of course there was. Villagers had their own ways of influencing NGO performance and certainly had both voice and exit (Brett 1993, based on Hirschmann 1970). Let me recall two of these.

When BPO was formed, *Manong* Roy was well aware of the requirements and practices of NGOs. After all, he had been an NGO staff member himself. He took the organization through the necessary steps of setting up regulations and committees to make it eligible for NGO support. In addition, under his guidance the BPO was launched with a big event. Thanks to *Manong* Roy, the BPO managed to convey the image of a strong organization that was worth having a project. Indeed, Minda later defended her fast-track support of the project by stating that she acted on the presumption that she was dealing with a well established organization, an

impression she had partly derived from the enthusiastic reports of MOUNT and other actors present in the launching event. The influence of local people was also apparent from the way *Manang* Mary and her companions managed to get a second tranche of funding from CWNGO by simply presenting themselves at the office. Instead of putting their request in a letter or passing it through the nearby office of MOUNT, they undertook the arduous trip to Baguio to give *acte de presence* in the office. The social pressure they thus put on Minda to respond to their needs was so strong that Minda felt she had no choice but to give the money, even though this was against the co-ordination agreement she had with MOUNT. As she said: "What could I do, they were just standing in the office with their shopping list".

In chapters 4 and 5 I dealt with the issue of room for manoeuvre of NGOs and People's Organizations respectively in shaping development in the villages. In all the cases presented, it was clear that villagers largely manage to appropriate NGO supported development programmes. They invest their own meaning in projects, develop their own organizing patterns and practices and manage to reshape the relation with NGOs, partly by acting upon identities they ascribe to these organizations and partly by playing on the multiple ties between villagers and NGO actors. In such a context it hardly makes sense to speak of accountability. The development relations, the meaning and practices of interventions all reflect the manifold ways in which the different actors enrol or pressure each other for their respective projects. In many cases the question of whether NGOs are accountable to their clients may be far less to the point than the question of whether NGOs have the necessary room for manoeuvre to exert some control over their intervention. But how about the accountability interfaces beyond the locality?

NGO accounts under construction

Here I consider how MOUNT and CWNGO constructed their accounts about the organizing process and the weaving project in Binasan. MOUNT found the process problematic due to what they called CWNGO's mishandling of the project, whereas CWNGO itself thought the project was quite successful. Although there had been problems, these had been solved without leading to major conflicts. The narratives of both NGOs were largely informed by their own approaches to development and their positions in the conflict. Both were from the same Consortium and therefore abided by the same policies, but their approaches in practice were quite different. In the first place, MOUNT put much more emphasis on inter-agency co-ordination, whereas CWNGO in this case let their relation with the women in the village prevail.

At the time the project started, in the early 1990s, CWNGO's management had developed a certain fatigue from the co-ordination involved in their programmes, especially since the organization usually worked in areas where other NGOs were also present. As the director used to say: "if we follow all procedures, it may take years before something happens. Sometimes it is better to plunge into an activity and explain later". MOUNT, on the other hand, clearly had different ideas about co-ordination and wanted CWNGO to abide by the correct procedures.

In the second place, MOUNT did not share CWNGO's approach to gender. CWNGO dealt directly with the women, relying implicitly on their own problem solving capacity, and trusting that what was good for the women would also contribute to the community. MOUNT, on the other hand, was in the first place concerned with the project in relation to the overall organizing process of the mixed People's Organization. It feared the project could turn into an isolated economic 'business' venture. MOUNT wanted the project to fall under the general People's Organization. Fay had a clear preference for 'mixed' gender organizations. As she contended:

"women are an integral part of the community. Maybe in other provinces separate women's organizations are necessary, but here in Mountain Province women are more outspoken and can assert themselves in 'mixed' organizations."

She felt that CWNGO divided the communities by "promoting" separate women's organizations. The CWNGO management, on the other hand, claimed that they did not promote separate women's organizations, but simply followed existing practices. In Binasan, as in practically all villages, there had been women's organizations operating in connection with churches or government agencies prior to the development of the NGO-related People's Organizations. In the eyes of CWNGO, the women were part of a larger whole but responsible for their own programme.

Besides these different approaches, other more everyday considerations played a role in the conflict. As one of the staff members of MOUNT said, the controversy could be viewed as "simply a clash of the personalities involved", believing that the conflict resulted from an individual problem between Minda and Fay. Another narrative circulating about the conflict among staff members explained it as a matter of *turfing*. Turfing is the expression used by NGO staff to denote conflicts of competition over territories or People's Organizations. Competition among NGOs easily sparks frustration among the staff. In the case of BPO, a MOUNT staff-member said that the problems with CWNGO were felt strongly because "we were just establishing ourselves in the area". Another said that due to these problems they lost their enthusiasm and developed instead a "wait-and-see-attitude".

These different principles and everyday competition seemed to inform each other. Perhaps MOUNT's insistence on procedure was also meant to safeguard its position in the village. Perhaps also CWNGO's confidence in women was partly informed by their need to defend their disregard for the co-ordination procedure. This intertwining of principles and organizational interests is of course not openly stated. Anyway, the idea that people try to enhance their interest by evoking principles is not new. What I find more interesting is to see how both NGOs build their narrative on what happened in the localities and the role of local villagers in this. Both NGOs thicken their narrative by referring to what happened in the village in order to make it more plausible. MOUNT claims to have a better approach, and that CWNGO was responsible for quarrels and jealousy in the village. On the other hand, CWNGO focuses on the way problems were solved. In order to make their case convincing, the NGOs enrol villagers in two ways.

Firstly, the NGOs try to make the villagers party to the conflict. They talk to villagers about their respective approaches, which in turn results in the reproduction of conflict in the village. Both NGO staff members also talked to the villagers about the inter-agency problems, and MOUNT displayed the correspondence between the NGOs on the wall of the community centre in the village. As a result, the weavers were highly aware of the agencies' conflict and felt uncomfortable about it. One of the women of the weavers' group said she felt guilty, because:

"We didn't know that MOUNT was already the agency here, so we approached CWNGO directly for support. When a MOUNT staff-member came and asked us all these questions, we knew there was a problem."

The incident shows that instances of moral accountability are not a one-way process either. Just like villagers dealing with NGOs, NGO staff members exert pressure on villagers on the basis of social ties and moral obligations, in order to win their support in the inter-agency conflict. It also brings out a certain irony in the story. While the NGOs considered the project problematic because of quarrels in the village, the weavers considered it problematic because of quarrels between the NGOs. Secondly, the NGOs bring the villagers to the accountability interfaces in the NGO Consortium, but not as social actors. Both agencies incorporate the villagers as supporters in the conflict. In the social construction of accounts by the NGOs the local villagers, lumped together as *'the people'*, appear as the anonymous supernumeraries of a power play. Fay explained her exclusion of CWNGO in the evaluation by claiming "this was between me and the people". In a similar vein, Minda defended herself by saying that "the women themselves asked for it".

What we see, then, is that NGOs legitimate their role in the village by narrating selected issues and events of the project. In order to close the narrative they sustain it with fragments of different discourses. MOUNT stresses the step-by-step organizing model and co-ordination procedures that prevail in the Consortium. CWNGO emphasizes the capacities of indigenous women and justifies its decisions by prioritising agreements and obligations with the women rather than with the other NGO involved. Both NGOs use a language of participation and claim to have acted in response to people's requests. I argued that local people appropriate NGO projects in the villages. However, as this case shows, once the project enters a 'second life' beyond the locality at accountability interfaces, the NGOs appropriate it right back. The accounts they construct reflect more the NGO's attitudes and interests than their accomplishments in the project or the ideas of their clients. Even though they express their narratives in accepted discourses of organizing and participation, these conceal a range of organizational matters from within the NGOs that inform and invade these accounts. The result is that the two NGOs, despite the fact that they largely share the same discursive repertoire, arrive at quite different narratives and interpretations of the project in question. This leaves the question of why, in this case of two competing narratives, the members of the NGOs Consortium favoured the MOUNT version of the story.

Accountability interface in the Consortium

At the meeting of the NGO's co-ordinating body, where the Binasan project was discussed, it was agreed that the project was problematic because CWNGO had mishandled it. The reason the MOUNT account found legitimation was to do with discourses in the network. In chapter 3, I described the discursive changes in the NGO Consortium. This Consortium, which started primarily as a political movement, expanded in the late 1980s when it became hinged around several discourses: political, indigenous and developmental. The role of local people differed in each of these discourses. The political discourse centred on the notion that social change had to be initiated by an educated vanguard, which implied an emphasis on top-down approaches in local interventions that needed to be well co-ordinated and systematic. The indigenous discourse centred on indigenous knowledge and traditional institutions for regulating conflict, which implied confidence in local villagers from whom outsiders could learn. The development discourse centred on participation and consultation with villagers. In 1994, the Consortium underwent a rectification campaign in which the political discourse regained its dominance. As a consequence of the rectification, class issues came to prevail over those of gender.

The accounts of MOUNT and CWNGO surf between all three discourses of the network, but with different emphases. The political discourse is much more pronounced in the account of MOUNT, while the indigenous and participatory discourses are more central in the account of CWNGO. When the project started, the hierarchy between the discourses in the Consortium was not very clear. However, by the time the conflict was brought before the Consortium meeting, the political discourse had been reinvigorated. Following the right procedures, adhering to a step-by-step organizing method without moving too fast into socio-economic projects, and integrated organizing rather than focusing on particular groups such as women, had all become the priorities of the time. The MOUNT story seamlessly fitted into this line of thinking.

This was exacerbated by elements of power. This was also the period when the mood in the NGO Consortium had turned against CWNGO. CWNGO had recently had several other co-ordination problems with agencies from the network and had become a kind of 'lame duck' that constituted an easy target. The general director, who had always strongly promoted and defended the approach of CWNGO, had moreover left the organization, creating a certain void in the 'negotiations' over the meaning of projects. At this moment, it was not difficult for MOUNT to enrol the members of the NGO network in their version of the story. Maybe people felt that CWNGO needed a lesson, or maybe the organization had simply become an easy target for scapegoating, but the result was that the BPO episode now became known as an 'inter-agency mess created by CWNGO'. In the case of BPO, then, the way in which accounts regarding the project were constructed had little to do with what happened locally, or with the narratives of the participants involved in the village. What mattered more, were the values and priorities of the NGOs and, in the end, discourse and power at the accountability interface of the NGOs.

Analysis: an actor-oriented perspective on accountability

At the start of this chapter I outlined two modes of accountability: rational and moral, which have their own pedigrees and are often treated as having little in common. However, as I argued, in practice these two modes of accountability inform each other. The case of the Binasan People's Organization underscores this point. Moral or everyday accountability and rational accountability are intertwined in practice, leading to possibly endless constellations of the three elements of accountability: actor relations, sense making and legitimacy. Instead of assuming that accountability brings these elements together in a particular way, one is faced with three open-ended questions, namely: how are accountability relations shaped, how are accounts constructed, and how do some accounts become more convincing than others? Let me briefly discuss each of these from an actor-oriented perspective.

Proponents of rational and moral accountability alike assume that *accountability relations* are clear: one has to respond to either an authority in a particular chain of command or to the society or group one belongs to. In previous chapters, I presented NGOs as constituted by networks of actors that cut across organizational boundaries, making inter-organizational relations more ambiguous than the official ties between them suggest. Moreover, the cases presented point to multiple ties between NGO actors and their clients and other stakeholders. As a result, what appears as an instrumental accountability relation may evolve into a social arrangement of mutual obligations where the ties that bind are both contractual and moral. Accountability relations between NGOs and their stakeholders appear, then, as negotiated properties: actors negotiate the nature of their obligations in accountability processes. The outcome is unpredictable. It has, for example, been observed that certain NGOs are capable of manipulating seemingly stringent accountability demands to their own ends (Biggs and Neame 1996, see also chapter 8).

The *accounts* that are the substance of accountability processes, -both formal and informal, technical and social-, are social constructions. The material presented in this chapter illustrates that the connection between accounts and what actually happens in a locality is loose. One implication of this insight is that we have to bring more explicitly into the analysis the 'accounter', *i.e.* the person or organization composing and presenting the accounts. Accounts reflect the way these actors made sense of what happened and how they strategically interpreted the accountability process and requirements. In every situation there is the possibility of multiple, competing or parallel accounts. As the above case demonstrated, explanations why certain accounts are constructed and not others may be more telling of the discursive frames and the everyday politics of the accounter than of the phenomena accounted for.

The question of how certain accounts become more *convincing* than others bears little relation to their 'accurateness' or 'truthfulness'. Entirely different accounts can be constructed on the substance of the same project. The case presented also points to the fallacy of judging the nature of accounts by their appearance. Seemingly factual accounts of a project may hide underlying power dynamics and conceal implicit

appeals to the moral responsiveness of the authorities receiving the account, in order to avoid harsh judgements. Actors make their accounts convincing by drawing on particular discourses and through enrolling other actors in accepting their interpretation of events (Latour 1987). An account becomes convincing, in other words, because its accouter is more successful than others in enrolling support and negotiating standards at interfaces of accountability.

I propose, then, to look at accountability processes from the angle of negotiating actors at accountability interfaces. In the previous chapter I argued that an NGO intervention model meant to steer local development was in fact more meaningful as a tool for sense making and ordering relations within NGO offices. Likewise, the above discussion of accountability leads me to conclude that local events and processes have relatively little bearing on accountability. What matters far more are the dynamics within and between the accounting NGO and the stakeholders it has to respond to. Since the domain of development intervention in the villages cannot be 'transported' to the other domains of NGO accountability, the NGO actors mediate accounts of what happened. How these accounts are 'read' depends in turn on the discursive and organizational properties of the stakeholder. These findings reiterate the importance of the notion of interface. Crucial for the understanding of accountability, is to follow the processes of actors' negotiations at interfaces of accountability.

Conclusion: finding accountability in unexpected corners

To conclude, I want to review the ongoing debate in the international development 'community' on accountability, referred to in the introduction of this chapter. Accountability is becoming increasingly important in development. In the 1980s, the term was rarely used. NGOs were the 'good gals' of development. Their responsiveness as value-driven intermediate organizations was taken for granted. We could say that NGOs 'radiated' moral accountability. Responsive by nature, their accountability did not have to be checked by formal means (van Dusseldorp 1992). Then, in the 1990s, formal accountability assumed importance. This can be understood as a response to the fact that impact studies revealed discrepancies between what NGOs claimed and how they performed. However, it can also be understood as part of changes taking place in dominant development discourses in the wider development 'community', and especially among donors.

The assumption of accountability seems the pillar on which the entire edifice of development by NGOs is built. Firstly, the growing support for NGOs in development has been understood in the context of what Robinson (1993) calls a New Policy Agenda. Notwithstanding detailed variations in policies, it is argued that post-Cold War development policy is generally driven by "beliefs organized around the twin poles of neo-liberal economics and Liberal Democratic theory" (Hulme and Edwards 1997: 5). In this agenda, NGOs have a double advantage. They are seen as the preferred channel for service provision in deliberate substitution for the State,

and act as vehicles for 'democratization' and essential components of a thriving 'civil society' (*ibid.*: 6). Leaving aside for the moment the question of how homogeneous this agenda is (see chapter 1), I want to point out how inextricably interwoven it is with expectations of formal accountability. Delegating service provision requires a notion that it is possible to control this from a distance. Investing trust in the democratizing capacities of NGOs carries with it the expectation that NGOs will be transparent. This has led to a development in which accountability is stretched to cover ever-larger domains of development. Originally largely restricted to financial accountability, it now becomes increasingly common to speak of impact-, private-, efficiency-, fiscal-, client-, and legal accountability (Smith-Sreen 1995: 36). The increased focus on NGO accountability may thus be viewed as an offspring of neo-liberal and liberal democratic development discourses.

What are the implications of viewing accountability as a social process for this discussion on NGOs and development? It means that we have to abandon the idea of a correspondence between accounts and the projects accounted for. This implies that the accountability process cannot be separated from the social constellations and processes that they intend to reveal. The accountability process itself is as vulnerable to power, hierarchy, conflicting interests and interpretations, and as much informed by culture as the 'real' situation it aims to provide an account of. Accountability may be as much concerned with making things visible as with rendering things invisible. This is the case as much for classical accountability as for the newer varieties, such as the stakeholder approach (Fowler 1997) and social auditing (Zadek and Gatward 1996). Transparency turns out to be a myth. The idea of transparency has the connotation of making the wrappings of the message as well as the messenger invisible. Transparency is meant to reveal the 'real stuff'. However, as this chapter argues, there is no real stuff outside of actors' accounts and the practices of making these accounts workable and legitimate (Law 1994: 26).

Although accountability will not lead to transparency, this does not mean that it is impossible. We may just have to step away from our ideal notions and ask instead how it operates in practice. Students of rational accountability tend to limit their view to the formal mechanisms of accountability, apparently without reference to the cultural embeddedness and everyday practices of NGOs. As a result of this normative approach, investigators researching NGO accountability may have no eye for localized forms of checks and balances. They assume that accountability does not exist where they do not find their preconceived mechanisms in place. Rather than asking what makes the NGO operate, and how a certain degree of coherence is achieved despite the absence of particular forms of accountability, they risk concluding that the NGOs operate arbitrarily, without any form of control.

In practice, however, a much wider range of accountability practices exists that appeal to moral responsiveness and are based on different sanction mechanisms than provided in rational accountability. They operate partly through formal accountability, altering its working in the process. They also operate outside of them, in the grey areas of social interaction, chatting, gossiping and rumour mongering. Although this happens in a less controlled manner than rational accountability, it may nonetheless be workable. The major asset of NGOs is their reputation as

organizations-that-do-good. They are, therefore, susceptible to accountability processes even if they do not concur with rational accounting procedures. Actors' accounts regarding NGO performance can obviously be mistakenly or maliciously wrong, but they do have a large impact on how NGOs 'survive' accountability processes. This may be effective in forcing NGOs to live up to their own standards as much as they can.

Notes

¹ See Lehmann 1990: 201-4; Smillie 1995: 149-51; Edwards and Hulme 1996; Zadek 1996.

² Although this section is partly based on authors propagating actor-network theories, I reject a central premise of this body of works that 'things' have agency. Nonetheless, I find their work useful for mine, because I find it relevant to look at the 'social life' of technology, for example through the examination of emergent properties and unintended uses as well as the way in which people accord agency to things. (See Verschoor (1997) for an attempt to combine actor network theories with actor-oriented approaches).



7

Making Sense of NGOs in Everyday Office Life

This chapter looks at questions of how NGO actors give meaning to their organization. Organizations, as I have emphasized, are characterized by multiple realities: they hinge around various and often conflicting discourses, and interweave different modes of operation, such as formal and informal organizing. In everyday practice NGOs are many things at the same time, which can be expressed metaphorically (*cf.* Morgan 1986). CWNGO, as we will see, can simultaneously be understood as a giver of services, a family, an ideological bastion, a source of livelihood, a space for women, a cultural statement of 'unity in diversity', a project bureaucracy, and an indigenous institution. NGO actors, as a result, do not have a single notion of what their organization is, does and wants. My interest is in knowing how these varying meanings interact, conflict or converge, and how NGO people define what is the more appropriate for particular times and spaces. This is not often subject to explicit reflection. Implicitly, however, questions of meaning underlie many of the countless minutiae of everyday life. In dealing with endless seemingly insignificant moments of decision making, NGO actors negotiate the meaning of the organization, for example in facing questions like: 'Should I compliment or criticize a staff member for a particular action?' 'Shall I go to a political rally or use the time to finish a report?' 'How should I respond to a request from a visitor?'; 'Who shall I join at the table for lunch?'; 'How should I deal with a staff member who is not productive, but has been a friend since high school?'. Hence, questions of meaning are implicit in virtually everything NGO actors face and do.

Several authors consider the issue of meaning so central to organization that they practically equate the two. Stewart Clegg (1998: 43) says that "the analysis of

organizations concerns the endowment of the material forms of institutional life, be it economic, religious, or whatever, with significance". Likewise, Susan Wright conceptualizes organizations as "continuous processes of organizing and negotiating meaning" (Wright 1994: 20). The NGO literature, however, is virtually silent about meaning making within organizations. Several authors, for example, are concerned with how Boards govern NGOs (Tandon 1996 and Baig 1999) but not how staff members themselves give meaning to these organizations. Similarly, there is a lot of attention given to the relation between NGOs and their stakeholders, but very little to relations within the NGO. Where this literature talks about NGO actors, it is almost always about the ideas and personalities of the management or NGO leaders, without asking how these relate to other staff members and how influential they really are in making sense of the NGO in everyday life. Given the importance of processes of negotiating meaning for understanding organizations, this seems a major gap.

This chapter, then, is concerned with social processes of meaning in NGOs. I am interested in seeing how different ideas are generated and negotiated regarding the question of what an NGO is, does and wants. A second interest is in how NGO actors manage to live with and work in these situations of multiplicity. Even in the most coherent organization there are always multiple readings of what the organization is and alternative modes of action to choose from. This leads me to wonder how the staff alternate between them, how they accommodate the discontinuities in organization, and how they nonetheless arrive at a certain level of coherence and continuity in their work.

Which actors are involved in shaping the meaning of an organization? NGO literature usually focuses on management actors. Implicitly it is assumed that management gives a face to the organization, provides its brain, and directs the practices of the staff. This view of management is also found in organization theories that consider management the centre of decision-making. Leadership may then be defined as "the management of meaning and the shaping of interpretations" (Smircich 1983: 351). I take a different perspective. I do not take for granted that management has a dominant influence in organizational processes. My point is that when a management effectively imposes meaning this needs explanation, just as much as when their influence is challenged. This has to do with what John Law calls the principle of symmetry, asserting that *everything* deserves explanation. As he says, "you don't want to start by assuming that there are certain classes of phenomena that don't need to be explained at all" (Law 1994: 10). This means that when management turns out to be powerful in shaping the organization, I want to know how this power is effected. Taking their influence for granted implies a belief that they have influence simply because they happen to be the management.

Other approaches that have a more inclusive interest in organization actors assume that differentially positioned categories of actors each carry their own perspective. Numerous studies analyze organization processes by distinguishing management from the rest, sometimes with further distinctions among the rest such as administration versus fieldworker perspectives (for NGOs, see for instance Suzuki 1998). This strand of approaches assumes that people have perspectives according to

their position in organizations. Again, I take a different perspective. As I found, *all* NGO actors are engaged in interpreting events and reflecting on their work. Their interpretations do not simply differ on the basis of their position, but are informed by a number of things. Alberto Arce identifies the latter as a combination of institutional knowledge, type of life world, and experience with clients (Arce 1993: 97). In this chapter, then, I study rather than assume how groups of actors evolve and give meaning to their organization.

The chapter is divided into three sections that focus on meaning making and ordering in the Cordillera Women's NGO. The first starts with a tour around the office of the NGO. It gives a picture of the organization and introduces some everyday practices. It concentrates on the use of *locales* in the office. *Locales* are domains for sense making, which, through symbolic associations with particular aspects of organization, help staff to traverse different modes of organizing and manage relations in the office. The second section is about the backgrounds of NGO actors and social networks in the organization. Different backgrounds lead to individual differentiation, but at the same time we have to realize that reflexivity is largely a social activity. It is through social interaction that knowledge becomes concentrated, views exchanged, experiences interpreted, attitudes fostered towards institutions and clients, ideas generated regarding legitimacy and style of work, and standards developed of what constitutes good or bad staff performance. The section starts with the stories of two staff members, followed by a discussion of five elements around which staff are differentiated and social networks organized. The focus on social networks turns out to be very powerful. It enables me to understand how diverse meanings attributed to the NGOs cross-cut hierarchical and horizontal relations, and at the same time it provides me with clues on how NGO actors create a workable situation without necessarily having a shared understanding of the organization. The third section looks at certain organizational practices, in particular those that are considered to be 'typically Pinoy' (Filipino). This gives me the opportunity to discuss the concept of culture, which, after all, is very much associated with the production of social meaning. As I argue, cultural institutions from the wider society are important in ordering the everyday practices of NGOs. However, they do not impose themselves on NGO actors, but are invoked in some cases and not others through actors' agency.

Although each of the three sections of this chapter presents an angle of its own, they all add up to the same story. They all point to the idea that organizational meaning emerges through the everyday practices of actors, who have agency. Meanings are not a product of culture, policy or a group of powerful actors. The construction of meanings is not located in one particular centre, but emerges from organizing processes. These processes are of a decentred nature, which means that "there is no single centre of control and that there is no single group or organizational body which controls this process" (Nuijten 1998: 316).

Tour d'office¹

Let me take you around the office of CWNGO in order to depict the different spaces and introduce some of the everyday practices associated with these spaces. The office is a brightly white, stately two-floor house, surrounded by a wall. It is located in a relatively quiet neighbourhood of Baguio City. The immediate impression it conveys to visitors familiar with NGOs in the Philippines is of a relatively well to do organization that has secured stable funding. The iron gate of the office opens on to a small courtyard with a garden. It is planted partly with flowers, and partly with vegetables that are used to cook lunch in the office. The garden is the responsibility of *Manang Jenny*, an elderly woman who is the cook and factotum of the office. Other staff members occasionally like to work with her in the garden. Many of them know gardening from the farms or gardens of their families and like the physical endeavour as a break from office work. They also like chatting with *Manang Jenny*. She seems the ideal representation of an indigenous woman of the Cordillera. She knows things such as the use of medicinal plants and can always be called upon to give a massage. She also knows everything about everybody and never misses a wedding, funeral or baptism. With her traditional outlook and ideas, she is often the centre of jokes, but, on the other hand, everybody is obviously very fond of her.

The courtyard with its old 3-piece suite is a favourite place for staff to sit during breaks and lunch. When a staff member returns from a fieldtrip, people usually gather in the yard to listen to the stories of the trip. The stories are a mixture of anecdotal field experiences, such as how a staff member lost her way, and accounts of the actual work undertaken; the response of women in the villages, attendance at activities, co-operation with the provincial staff, problems and political intricacies encountered in the locality. Every staff member is required to write detailed reports on trips. In practice these reports are not always read and the informal reports given in the yard are often the primary means by which both staff and management remain updated on developments in the field.

In the yard is a blackboard where issues are written that require immediate attention. They announce activities in the city, such as a lecture to be given at a local university, a wake for a deceased person from the extensive NGO network, or a call upon all staff members to attend the hearing of a sexual harassment case that will be held in court. Such activities are usually attended by the administrative staff and organizers. They enjoy doing things outside the office and, unlike the management, can arrange this within their workload. Although management can seldom attend these kinds of events in person, they take great interest in learning what happened. This is another important function of the courtyard. It is the place where staff members relay information about these public events. The management then brings this information to the attention of people they consider relevant, often during chance meetings, for example in public transport vehicles or doctor's waiting rooms.

The yard is further used as a waiting room for the many people who visit the office. Visitors range from members of a CWNGO-sponsored weaving co-operative

who bring their bags of finished blankets to be sold at the office, staff of other NGOs or occasionally government offices, a host of visitors from Manila or abroad, and people who come to see a particular staff member on a personal matter. Visits are both scheduled and unscheduled, the latter in particular take place in the informal setting of the yard. Finally, the yard is regularly used for spontaneous gatherings at the end of the day when husbands pick up their wives, and visitors from other NGOs drop by. Occasionally, the relaxed chatting, gossiping, and joking that seem to belong to this time of day are extended to a restaurant where participants enjoy beer and food.

From the courtyard, a carved wooden door forms the entry into the office, a large glass sliding-door gives direct access to the library, and iron-wrought winding stairs lead to the second floor. The library is extensive and up-to-date, which is mainly due to the director's many travels abroad and her passion for collecting books. Like so many other NGOs, CWNGO maintains its own clipping service, a vast file of newspaper clippings on a large range of topics that is maintained by the librarian and one other staff member. The clipping takes many hours and staff members who have nothing particular to do will sometimes sit down and help out. The task is considered arduous and of little fulfilment since it never ends and because the file is not often consulted. The library table with all the newspapers, however, has its own attraction as a favourite locale for chatting. More than any other place, this is the domain of staff at the lower end of the NGO's hierarchy, and it is here that they exchange their views on the management of the office. I related above how informal story telling in the yard after returning from a fieldtrip often has more meaning than a written report on the same trip. However, despite the apparent spontaneity, these oral reports are also edited. That is, they are shaped in a way considered to be acceptable to the management. Frequently, another kind of reporting takes place later, in more secluded settings with a few staff-friends, where the 'report' is retold without reservations, so that personal opinions find an outlet and events are positioned and given meaning within a general assessment of the NGO and its work. The library is a suitable place for these kinds of discussions.

Apart from the library, the ground floor of the office consists of a spacious kitchen, a bathroom, and two other rooms. The larger of these two rooms serves many purposes. It contains a number of corners with desks and filing cabinets for everyday use. During meetings, the furniture is reorganized to form a large conference table with a number of blackboards and easels for flap-overs on which staff members can present their reports. The smaller room is almost empty of furniture and has built-in cabinets along the wall. The room is used to store materials for the field, such as cartons with books and clothes that were donated by international support groups. It also stores an enormous quantity of sleeping mats and blankets used during meetings when the entire provincial staff comes to Baguio and many sleep overnight in the office. The small room is also ideally suited for after-lunch naps.

Upstairs, there are another five rooms positioned around a landing. On the landing stands a television set, which is normally left switched on, mainly for the sake of the children. There are always children at the office. Some come with their

mothers everyday, others only when their day-care centre is closed or the babysitter is not available. For some time, CWNGO maintained its own day-care facility, in the garage at the side of the house, but since its closure children are left to roam around the office. When one of them starts to cry, whoever is nearby comforts it, without bothering to call for the mother. The children are used to playing by themselves and when bored one of the staff will play with them, or a younger staff member is told to take care of them.

The smallest room, across the landing, is the director's office. It is the only room that is normally kept locked. The lock is not so much a token of the status of the director, but rather a means of security because this room houses the vault containing the records of the NGO as well as correspondence and financial files. As in other NGOs, details on finances are firmly locked away, both concerning income and expenditure. Project proposals, for example, can easily be borrowed by other NGOs to help them formulate their own, but not without first removing the accompanying budget. One of the rationales for this practice is that, once people know how much money a proposal has brought to the office, other NGOs may want to borrow money for their own programmes. The director is the only one who has a separate room and her own computer. All others share. The cabinets and desks in the rooms are placed to create different corners for staff members, though one can easily overhear what happens in other corners. Those staff members who do not want to be overheard leave the office or lower their voice to a whisper. Sometimes it suffices to shift into one of the local languages, when staff from the same area of origin wish to talk in private. The four computers available to staff members are placed in one of the office rooms. This room is mainly the domain of Liwaya, a young, *Tagalog* speaking woman, and a pronounced lesbian. On the wall near her desk are several cartoons that appear to make statements against conventional notions and taboos regarding female sexuality. One of them displays a woman drowning in the bathtub after giving herself a splashing orgasm while taking a bath.

The walls in the office are decorated with posters and weavings that remind one of past and present NGO campaigns, globalized indigenous and women's causes, and past international visitors. In between the decorations, notice boards are scattered with announcements of activities and newspaper clippings. A remarkable element in the use of the walls, are the numerous computer-printed instructions on the use of the office. Some of them are funny reminders, such as the one in the toilet that reads: "If you don't flush, we shall flush you; signed: the spirits of the peach tiles (look around, we're here)". Most are made up as official instructions. Another paper in the same toilet, for example, gives a list of instructions on how to use the facility, such as "flush after using", and "refill the pails when near empty". This list is signed the 'management committee CWNGO Inc'. Among the official looking notices is a list of daily office cleaning tasks and an accompanying schedule with all names of staff, including the management, on the basis of rotation. Although members of the management team sometimes lend a hand, in practice nobody would call on them to stick to the schedule and cleaning is usually left to some junior staff members who stay overnight in the office.

The number of desks occupied during working days varies considerably, except for the bi-monthly pay-days when practically all the staff reports to the office. In the morning, staff trickle in. It is not unusual for staff members to report late. An explanation for being late is normally given, but practically any excuse is acceptable even if one occasionally admits to having been too 'lazy' to come in early. Usually, however, being late is related to family responsibilities, which, as everybody knows, are inevitable and often need priority. During the day, staff come and go. Because of close collaboration with other NGOs there are many meetings and training sessions outside and they have many other things to attend to in the city. Before leaving the office, the staff are expected to register in an office book where they go and how long it will take, though the usual practice is simply to announce it to one of the other staff. Although staff do not always adhere to the standard office working day, they frequently extend their working time beyond office hours. On most evenings, there are people working at the computers or preparing a training session or fieldtrip. There are always some who sleep in the office. They finish work too late to go home, or they simply enjoy staying together, preparing snacks in the kitchen and watching rented video tapes. Thus the large room is transformed into a cosy space for social gatherings.

Locales for sense making

What does this tour around the everyday practices of the different spaces of the office tell us about negotiating the meaning of NGO relations and activities? In the first place, it shows how the "locales provide a variety of arenas in which current issues and problems are interpreted and re-interpreted" (de Vries 1992a: 59). The locales are the domains of different groups in the office. While the management gathers in the room of the director, the lower staff chat in the library to arrive at an understanding of ongoing issues. It is here that they discuss whether certain statements or decisions of management actors are right or wrong in their eyes. Meaning-making in these locales is not limited to issues regarding the organization. It is also in particular locales that values are negotiated and practical consciousness tested, such as those regarding gender and sexuality. Stories about marital life and other aspects of life experiences are shared in office corners and discussed from different angles, including feminist perspectives versus notions of family obligations. It is in the kitchen that staff members playfully engage in discussions where *Manang* Jenny teaches the staff how to accommodate to gender expectations. For instance, Jenny likes to drink a few glasses of beer or gin during social occasions. Although this is not forbidden for elderly women in the Cordillera, it remains uneasy. As a compromise, *Manang* Jenny explains, she "only drinks when she is wearing pants, not a skirt". In their turn, Liwaya and another lesbian provoke *Manang* Jenny –to the great enjoyment of the other staff members present- with statements that lesbian women actually engage in sex with each other. *Manang* Jenny always replies with open revulsion, asking incredible questions about the details of how they do it. It is a two-

way teasing with lots of laughter, yet with serious undercurrents providing room to explain and negotiate norms of sexuality.

In the second place, the locales provide space to accommodate the different styles of organization that interplay in the NGOs, for instance, to help NGO actors to regulate formal and informal aspects of organizational life. The courtyard is the place for informal reporting, but when the big room on the ground floor is transformed into a conference room, staff members will switch to a style of reporting that befits the formal language of NGO organizing models. The spatial separation helps staff to bridge different modes of NGO work that are all inherent parts of the organization. In the court they 'think' informal, and in the conference room they automatically 'think' formal. This is also apparent in bodily practices: in the courtyard one can literally relax by sinking into the cushions of the sofa, but before re-entering the office a staff member must straighten her skirt.

Thirdly, the different locales help NGO actors to organize and negotiate their relations. NGO actors in the office are bound by multiple ties and have developed multi-faceted relations. As we see below, in the office the social networks of family, friendship, political comradeship and formal relations are all intertwined. Using the symbolism of different locales is one way in which NGO actors manoeuvre these multiple relations. When a management actor calls a staff member to her office, the staff member instantly knows that it is likely that there is a problem and that she may be reprimanded. If it were an ordinary matter the management actor would simply walk over to the staff member's corner to discuss it casually half-sitting on the desk. There is a balcony at the back of one of the office rooms on the first floor that can only be reached by passing through the room, and it is out of sight of the remainder of the office. This is the place for heart-to-heart talks, where a manager might discuss matters that touch on the very motivations and performance of staff members, the kind of conversation where the full weight of formal and moral responsibilities towards the organization are at stake. Conversely, when a staff member has a problem to discuss with the management, she carefully deliberates whether to address them in their office or wait for an opportunity to discuss it more informally and thereby call upon the social ties that bind.

Locales are thus domains of sense making, and help NGO actors to order and organize office life. Although the different locales have a symbolic connotation linked to particular aspects of organization, it is important to realize that this symbolic meaning is not a property of the locales themselves that structure people's behaviour; instead such meaning is only achieved when invoked by an actor's agency. That is, the meaning of these locales must be invested in and interpreted by people. To paraphrase Henrietta Moore (1994: 96), one might say that it is only by actually falling down on the sofa and sighing that you are tired, that the informal meaning of the courtyard is invoked. As Moore points out: "Actors are continually involved in the strategic interpretation and reinterpretation of the cultural meanings that inform the organization of their world as a consequence of their day-to-day activities in that world" (*ibid.*: 76). Even though these actors may not always be discursively aware of the symbolic use of different locales, they use them strategically through a practical knowledge of their meaning. They use the different

spaces to facilitate some of the complexities of organization and to manoeuvre their social relations in the office.

The importance of social networks²

Whatever an NGO is depends on how NGO actors perceive and act upon the meanings and standards of the organization. Everything has to be made sense of in order to be valued, judged, or acted upon. How actors interpret the policy and practices of the NGO depends on their life worlds, institutional histories, experiences with NGO clients and other elements that differentiate actors. These may be individual elements, but considering that sense making is largely a social process, networks are an important focus for analysis. It is in social networks that actors shape and play out the meaning of their organization. In CWNGO, a first differentiation in networks appears to separate management from middle cadres and from organizers or field workers. However, as I gradually found out, social networks are formed around a number of elements, resulting in shifting constellations in the office that cannot be reduced to two or three separate social networks whose members share a particular organizational perspective. The elements that differentiate staff are important for social networks. They also play a role in shaping staff loyalties within and outside the organization. Before discussing some of them separately, let me recount the stories of two staff members: Aster and Susan. They are both college graduates in their early thirties, working as middle-level staff members in the Baguio office of CWNGO. Yet their stories differ significantly.

Aster

Aster grew up in a city adjacent to Baguio, where her family has some land. She attended college in the 1980s in one of the lowland towns when the National Democratic Student Movement was very strong in Philippine universities, quickly turning her into a political activist. As a city girl, Aster never experienced herself as indigenous until her college years in the lowlands, when she became conscious of her indigenous background, due to occasional questions of her college mates about whether Igorots had tails, or lived in trees. After graduation, Aster engaged in the National Democratic movement in the Cordillera. She briefly joined a guerrilla group of the New Peoples Army, but soon decided to work above ground instead. She then became a programme co-ordinator of an NGO belonging to the Cordillera NGO Consortium.

After a year she quit that job for a combination of political and personal reasons. She lost political confidence in the movement's leadership when some of her friends were accused of being government infiltrators in the National Democratic movement, and had to vacate their positions. According to Aster, the allegations were untrue and they were not given fair treatment by the political leadership in the region. The other reason was that she could not combine NGO work with her family

obligations. She was married to a photographer, who went to study in Australia, when she was pregnant. When the baby came, named after Bob Dylan, she had to stay home to take care of him. For several years she lived in a house owned by her in-laws and lived on an allowance sent by her husband. During one of the visits of her husband she became pregnant again, so she had two children to take care of.

At the end of 1992, the director of CWNGO met Aster and asked her to help out in organizing a conference. She couldn't take the job because of the children. However, some time later she took in domestic help and applied to the office. She knew that CWNGO was part of the NGO Consortium that belonged to the National Democratic movement that she had come to dislike. Nonetheless, she was motivated to do NGO work, as long as she was not going to be politically involved again. She started to work at the socio-economic desk of the office and was involved in research work. I came to know Aster better when we made several field trips together for research. Aster turned out to have a keen interest in the village ways of life, especially those aspects of village life that were reminiscent of 'tradition'. After a day of interviewing professionals attached to modern institutions like the school, she would suggest that we walk to the higher part of the village where the old men were seated in the Dap-ay, a sacred circle of stones. We then chatted about their lives, while young boys were busy scratching the soles of the old men's feet with sticks. As she said on one of these occasions: "I wish I could stay in a village like this and just sit down with the people and let them tell their stories, no research agenda, just their stories". Although Aster grew up in Baguio City, her family originated from a village which, according to Aster, was one of the oldest and most traditional in the Province, with people practising many of their indigenous institutions. She was obviously proud of this background.

Her interest in the indigenous lifestyle was complemented by a special concern for women. This was directly related to her own experiences. When her husband returned from Australia, the marriage became problematic (eventually they separated), and she commented:

"There are many things I would like to do, but I don't have the time. I have to be at home because of the children. I actually have three now, because the other one came home [i.e. her husband]. You see, it was easier when he was not around because I only had to worry about the two. That is how you can see women's lives in the communities, how you can feel the problems of motherhood."

The identification of Aster with local village women's lives did not mean that she herself fitted into this life. Her own lifestyle was quite different from the way Cordillera women behaved, and this was not lost on the women of the village. They started to comment on the way Aster spoke and some of the things she said. One day she dropped by the village on her way to a meeting in the provincial town, in the company of a male friend. I was not present on this occasion, but several of the women told me later that they did not like Aster any more. "*Madi ni Aster*", one of them said, "Aster is a bad woman". Apparently, they felt Aster's behaviour had not been appropriate: "She behaved towards the man as a wife, not as an acquaintance".

In the meantime, Aster grew increasingly critical of CWNGO and began to consider searching for another job. Eventually, she resigned. Her objections against the organization were based on several things. Firstly, she was critical of the way work was organized. There were the ordinary irritations that seem to be an inevitable part of hectic NGO life. The head of her desk was often out of the office for meetings and there was no clear communication about activities and the arrangement of tasks. Aster felt especially irritated when such things affected the local women, and expectations were not met. Aster did not see these incidents as isolated events, but interpreted them in connection with her own institutional history, i.e. her past in the National Democratic movement. When a management actor forgot something, Aster would assert "you see, they do not live up to their own principles", or "the movement for social change does not care about its own people".

Secondly, it seems Aster was disappointed with the way her position evolved in the organization. When she entered CWNGO she already had a past history, albeit briefly, as an NGO programme co-ordinator. In comparison to other staff members, she did not feel much distance between herself and the management. This was apparent in the way she reported and fed back information to the management. The management actors initially seemed to treat her as an experienced NGO person. When a new position was created of co-ordinator of the organizers, Aster applied for the position along with another staff member who had been working with CWNGO for the past four years. In the first instance, the management decided that Aster and her colleague would share the co-ordinator's duties. In practice, however, it was clear that the position had actually been given to the other person. In later meetings they stopped referring to the sharing arrangement altogether. Initially Aster stated that she did not mind, but she kept referring back to it, until I concluded that she had in fact been very insulted by it.

Despite her critique, Aster continued working for CWNGO, if only because her salary was the sole source of income for the family. In the course of months, however, the misgivings between Aster and CWNGO became increasingly two-way, especially when Aster linked up with a new NGO that worked with the government. When CWNGO found out she was working simultaneously for another organization that was locally considered to be in competition with the NGO Consortium, they gave her an ultimatum to choose between her two commitments. Although the new NGO was not successful in getting funds and in providing her with a salary (in fact it collapsed within a few months), Aster decided to leave CWNGO.

Susan

Susan is one of the single women in the office and a few years younger than Aster. After attaining her college degree in education in a Baguio-based university, she wanted to have a job as soon as she could and therefore applied to a wide range of organizations, both government and non-government. She knew of the NGO Consortium through her brother, who worked for another of the NGOs, so she applied to CWNGO. She became a day-care teacher for several years, until funding stopped and the day-care centre closed. Then Susan became the NGO officer for

Non-Formal Education, which meant that she was responsible for literacy training. She started to provide training in a poor urban area, conducted a region-wide survey on literacy, trained village volunteers and took the initiative to work out a large-scale literacy programme in co-operation with one of the government offices in the region.

Susan originates from and grew up in Bontok. As she says, that makes her “indigenous by blood, by birth, by genes and by everything. Ever since I was a kid I have known I am part of the indigenous group and that I belong to a clan and a tribe”. What seemed to matter in her everyday life were her specific Bontok origins. Local indigenous politics affected her relations in the office. This was particularly clear when one of Susan’s cousins was killed in the streets of Baguio. It was a random killing, by a person who ran ‘*amok*’ and stabbed blindly at people around him with a knife. The perpetrator was taken to prison. Over some snacks in one of Baguio’s many American-style hamburger parlours, she explained to me what the killing meant to her family. Immaculately dressed as usual, a soft-voiced city girl, she told me that some of the elders of her family clan had come to Baguio. She said she was tired after nightlong rituals and deliberations on how to deal with the killing:

“We had a long discussion with our cousins. The killer will probably get a life long sentence but for them this is not enough: revenge is revenge and blood is blood. They are considering killing him, but they are still looking for the right person for revenge. The actual killer wouldn’t suffice, because he is nothing. Our cousin was a working professional, so it would also have to be a working professional. We [her Baguio based brother and herself] pleaded with them to let it rest and wait for the court decision. My brother and I are known here and live in Baguio, so we have no security. But then, if the elders decide, there is nothing we can do.”

While these deliberations went on for several weeks,³ she never mentioned anything about them in the office. She explained: “Most of our staff are from Sagada and Besao, and the killer is partly from Sagada and partly from a place near Besao. There are actually some who know his family, that’s why I can never talk about this in the office”.

Susan’s origin from Bontok has further implications for her work in an NGO. When her brother started to work for an NGO, word went around in Bontok that he had become a communist. When Susan started her job with CWNGO, she decided not to tell her folks since she was afraid it would further affect her mother’s position in the community, who was already criticized for her son’s involvement. Some of her siblings, however, knew of her position and tried continually to convince her to find a different job. Apart from the political considerations, they felt that as the youngest daughter she had to take financial responsibility for her parents and thus needed to look for a better paying job. As a result, Susan often considered the possibility of changing to a government office.

Like most staff members of CWNGO, Susan was familiar with and dedicated to the political standpoints of the NGO movement, or ‘*the principle*’, as she called it. In her everyday practices, however, she found more direction in her identification with women from the point of view of a daughter-cum-educator in the Cordillera. Susan

firmly believed in the merits of adult literacy training. In the case of Susan, this was not so much based on generalized ideas about indigenous women, but her students remind her of her mother. "My mother is also 'no-read no-write'. I can see that every time she comes to Baguio, she always needs assistance. When crossing the street, when buying, everything". Susan also identifies with the feminist ideas of CWNGO, but she is not so sure if gender equality is feasible in the Cordillera. To her mind it will need years of patient training to achieve changes in this respect. According to her,

"The idea of equality is a very nice one, but it only works when your husband goes along with the idea. As for now, in our family, it seems it is not applicable. I see all my brothers are very patriarchal. And especially when your parents agree with their ideas, you cannot quarrel about it. Because it is what they have known, and know. So, it is hard to teach women equality when their culture dictates that women should be like women."

Unlike Aster, Susan felt a large distance between herself and the management committee. She felt "it seems that you must practice every word, before you can utter it to them." In meetings, she would not say much unless it directly concerned the literacy programme. In 1995, the workload changed. In an assessment of NGO work, it was decided that NGOs should start to concentrate again on basic organizing. A specialized programme such as the literacy training was given low priority. As a result, Susan would have to shift her work towards organizing and maintain the literacy programme on the side. She did not protest the decision.

Several months after the management of CWNGO had reorganized her work, Susan took on a job with a government office in Bontok. As with Aster, the considerations and experiences leading to the job transfer were multi-layered. One layer was made up of mounting pressure from the side of her relatives. For this particular job, her sister had simply made an appointment for her with the head of the government office. Another layer was formed by the erosion in her motivation to continue working with CWNGO. She was very disappointed that her literacy programme had been abandoned. In addition, she had grown impatient with the long 'rectification' process in the NGO (see chapter 3), and especially by the fact that this was dealt with only at management level. She became frustrated when every time she inquired about what was going to happen, she was told to be patient because it was all part of the '*proceso*'. As she said when I saw her several months after she had resigned: "But when was this proceso going to be finished and when would they start to listen to us?"

Although Susan had increasingly been playing with the idea of changing jobs, the decision was activated by a particular incident that happened in the office. She had written an application letter that through some mistake was printed under the eyes of one of the managers. In her presence, this person proclaimed: "Look, here is an application letter". Susan recalled the moment:

"She then called everybody and showed them the letter. I was just watching them. When I said it was not true that I was leaving, she said in

a high-pitched voice: "So, why do you apply, is it to show you are overqualified?" I did not expect that. *I thought that they would sit with me and talk and ask me how I see things and try to keep me in the organization."*

She felt the response of this manager to be deeply humiliating, especially because it was done in public. This settled her decision to resign.

When Susan resigned, the only motivation she reported to the management was family considerations. She never mentioned the other layers affecting her resignation, such as her disappointment about the literacy programme, the protest she had of not being heard in the political process, and the sense of humiliation she had felt. Through the way she formulated her motivation to resign, she avoided conflict with the management of CWNGO. That did not mean she had kept silent. She had discussed her motivation more completely with other members of staff, during lunches and in the library, where ideas about the management of the office and the rectification process in the NGOs were aired. Rather than bringing their ideas into the meetings, they defined their options as carrying on or resigning. Their experiences and ideas were channelled into endless deliberations on whether, how and when to resign and where to create alternative livelihood options.

Of backgrounds and social networks

From the stories it appears that Aster and Susan have a lot in common. They were both highly motivated to work with indigenous women and both were confronted with competing loyalties. While Susan felt the pull of family obligations, Aster had to accommodate her commitment to the NGO with the responsibility for her children and loyalty to her old friends and political network. In both cases an important factor eroding their identification with the NGO consisted of the sense of not being appreciated by the management. There are, however, also differences in the stories. Because of their backgrounds and organizational experiences they had arrived at distinct interpretations of the meaning of NGO activities, a different construction of their clients, and dissimilar ways of behaving with local women. They also differed in how they defined and used their room for manoeuvre within the NGO organization. In the following I discuss five elements that account for some of these differences.

Political involvement

In chapter 1 I argued that politics is considered a highly important aspect differentiating NGOs in the Philippines. Let me therefore start with this element. The NGO staff consist of three political categories. A handful are deeply involved in the politics of the National Democratic movement. This group includes the three members of the management committee as well as several other staff members. This is the group that deals almost exclusively with external relations, including funding agencies, co-ordination with other NGOs in the network, planning, staff meetings,

etc. This group forms a close social network in many respects. They carry out many activities together, have lots of issues to co-ordinate and they go back together a long time.

The second group is composed of staff who have insight into and affinity with the National Democratic body of thought. It consists of lower staff in the Baguio office and a number of provincial staff members. They do not assume a position in the political movement, except that those in Baguio usually belong to a group that sporadically meets for education purposes. They form a social network, but not so closely as the above-mentioned core group. They derive much of their motivation for the work and loyalty to the organization from their political ideas and their sense of belonging to the movement. They often talk among themselves about the political meaning of their work. This group is also critical of the ways in which the NGO operates. As exemplified by Susan, they may feel excluded from discussions on which they nonetheless have opinions.

A third category of staff members is not familiar with the political aspects of the NGO. They are staff hired for particular jobs and some of the provincial staff. They only have a vague conception of the wider movement in which the NGO is situated. They do not have a particular loyalty to the network, and may easily move on when other job opportunities arise. This is not a social group in the sense that they relate on the basis of a shared understanding of the work they carry out. Almost by default, they have some influence in the organization simply on account of not knowing when to shut up and not being aware of certain taboos. This means that they occasionally raise questions in meetings that would be unthinkable from others, for example about staff participation in decision making. Such questions may nonetheless resonate for some time in discussions in the office.

Place of origin

One thing that all staff members of CWNGO share is their enthusiasm for going to the field and interacting with indigenous women. As Susan once expressed this:

“I praise the vendors and that kind of woman more than those in the offices. Because they are the women who are not ashamed of what their life really is. With those women you see the real ‘them’. When I am with peasant indigenous women, I feel more open and my real ‘me’. No plastic smiles, no plastic actions.”

Every single member of staff I talked to, found their primary motivation for the work in their commitment to indigenous women. They did not mean just any indigenous woman, but those who were poor and had little education. These were the ‘real’ women. Within the office, this found expression in the fondness that all staff felt towards *Manang* Jenny. *Manang* Jenny herself, of course, never expressed such generalized feelings. Her interest with the ‘real’ women was which village they came from, to what clan they belonged, and whether they could find common relatives. Although all staff members shared this commitment to indigenous women, the cases of Aster and Susan are exemplary of the difference between women born or

educated in the lowlands and women who really spent most of their lives in the Cordillera.

A number of staff members were born in the lowlands and only got to know indigenous women when they started to work for CWNGO. They had their own stories to tell of how they had moved from prejudice to an appreciation of indigenous culture. In addition, a number of staff members were educated in the lowlands. They had similar stories of how they personally rediscovered the indigenous population. Working for CWNGO meant a (temporary) choice away from a city career, often symbolized by referring to different dress codes, expressed by one staff member as: "Just after graduation, I thought I was educated and a professional. I wanted to have my own attaché case and walk with high heels". These lowland and urban-raised staff members tended to view indigenosity in terms of properties. Aster's interest in the indigenous way of life, for example, was selectively focused on the traditional aspects that she considered 'truly' indigenous. One of the lowland staff explained her admiration for 'grassroots' indigenous women as follows:

"Staying with the women in the Cordillera really humbled me. As a lowlander, I had those attitudes on what clothes to wear, and the things I wanted to have. But when I was integrated with these women, I noticed they have one-room houses, they really don't have so many material things and they are satisfied with what they eat, even if they have *camote* all the time. Me, I was not like that. I didn't even eat vegetables before. It really humbled me. That is why my style of living now is very simple and that is what I teach my kids. Before, I liked so much jewellery, but now I don't think that is necessary any more."

Staff members who had grown up in the provinces, like Susan, did not often refer to generalized indigenous properties, but to more specific local origins. To them, being indigenous implied in the first place that they had to respect certain practices and obligations, in the villages as well as in the office. This difference had several implications for social networking and sense making in the office, as well as for different client constructions,⁴ styles of intervention and room for manoeuvre of organizers.

To start with the office, place of origin combined with place in education made a difference in the language used and therefore the social networks one belonged to and the influence one could have. In the first place, staff educated in the lowlands were fluent in English and *Tagalog*, which gave them a definite advantage in dealing with policy matters, paper work and external relations. They often spoke English or *Tagalog* among themselves. Staff raised in the provinces were more at ease with their local vernaculars. Among them, those speaking *Kankanaey* were a majority. This was also the native language of two out of the three managers of CWNGO. Although at times, clan or village membership would set *Kankanaey* people apart, as happened when Susan's cousin was killed, those speaking *Kankanaey* often had news to exchange and enjoyed talking together. Those speaking other indigenous languages

were minorities within the office. The only two Ifugao-speaking junior staff members were very close friends, but had little to say in the office.

The two groups of staff -lowland, educated, city-raised staff, and provincial staff- differed in the way in which they constructed their images of the women they worked with. The lowland educated staff had a general admiration for indigenous women, but often at the same time viewed them as 'in need of learning', almost with the endearment adults display towards children. Those from the provinces were raised with a firm respect for older women. They saw their clients in the first place as women to be respected, and in whose service they worked. This resulted in different styles of intervention. Those staff members that were not so closely embedded in the localities tended to assume the role of organizer and educator and entered the villages with a certain aura of authority. Although they could be very effective, their attitude could also put their women clients off, as happened with Aster. Provincially raised staff, on the other hand, had the tendency to assume the modest role of a young woman in the village. They were soft-spoken, and prepared to help the women they visited, among others things with household chores. This made them well-liked and accepted. On the other hand, they found it difficult to influence the organizing process in the village. I remember one meeting of a village women's organization, where the provincial staff member of CWNGO who was present did not say a single word during the entire meeting. She later explained she felt too shy to speak when the elder women were present.

Kinship

Real and symbolic family relations are very pervasive of everyday life in the NGO. In the first place, the space staff members had to manoeuvre their positioning in social networks in the office differed according to the involvement of their family in the NGO Consortium and the wider National Democratic movement. At the time I conducted a survey among the staff of CWNGO, 13 staff members were married, and eight of their husbands worked as staff or volunteers in the network. In addition, several staff members had siblings or cousins working with organizations of the movement. Having a husband in the same field of work mattered for the involvement of staff members in the organization. This can be exemplified by the difference between Minda and Violet. Both of them belonged to the management committee. However, while Violet was married to a man within the NGO Consortium, Minda's husband wanted nothing to do with the NGOs. Violet could stay late in the office and work during weekends and her husband took his share in picking up the children from their day-care. Minda, on the other hand, always had to rush home and had to negotiate every trip she wanted to make to the field. Her husband was always suspiciously jealous of her whereabouts and she regularly came to the office with a black eye. By the end of the afternoon, the husbands often dropped by the office and quite often this resulted in suppers in one of the downtown restaurants. Because Minda could not join these gatherings she missed the social occasions that often followed the working day where the latest information was passed on and where social bonds were glued together.⁵

In the second place, NGO organizations take on many of the aspects of family relations. The longer staff members are involved, the denser become their relationships with colleagues. Bonds of symbolic kinship are forged through godparenthood on the occasions of childbirth and marriage. Children normally have at least four godparents and twelve is not exceptional. Often when a child is born within the NGO, a majority of its godparents will be drawn from the office or NGO Consortium. Some management actors in the Consortium have as many as 20 or 30 godchildren. The identification of staff members with the NGOs was diverse in this respect. While for some the NGO represented merely a job, others used their involvement as an escape from their own family and saw the NGO almost as a substitute. Several single staff members, especially those among the last born in their own family, preferred staying in the NGO office to living in the stifling environment of their family where they had to cope with the whims of their elder siblings. As often as they could they stayed overnight in the office.⁶

The sense of family in NGOs goes beyond mere interpersonal relationships. The Consortium NGOs make the personal life of staff members a case of their concern if necessary.⁷ When *Manang Jenny* had a fight with her husband, this became an agenda item in a management meeting resulting in an attempt to reconcile the couple. It could also result in particular decisions regarding staff deployment and tasking. This happened, for example, in the case of *Chat*, one of CWNGO's junior staff. *Chat* was the girlfriend of one of the youth organizers of the NGO Consortium. After some time, *Chat* became pregnant. A difficult situation emerged, when the father-to-be was not sure he wanted to take responsibility for the child and pursue the relationship. Moreover, the couple did not have enough money to start a family. Some people in the NGO network first mediated between the couple, and convinced the man to marry *Chat*. They then requested CWNGO to hire *Chat* as a staff member. *Chat's* NGO salary and her friend's allowance combined were just enough to sustain their family.

Motherhood, marriage and sexuality

Social networks in the office partly coincide with motherhood. The mothers usually get along well together, and share many concerns. They take care of each other's children, help each other with practical things like passing on baby's clothes and maternity dresses and attending birthday parties. Among themselves, married women spend a lot of time discussing sexual matters and jokes, which they refrain from when the single 'girls' are present. The singles, on the other hand, discuss things like boyfriends, match making, and movies and often plan things to do together in their spare time. Their time allocation leaves more room for leisure, and they occasionally take their lunch in town, and go shopping or watch a movie on Saturday afternoons.

Motherhood had a lot of bearing on everyday office life. Usually, mothers with small children refrained from fieldwork and had to be given deskwork. At some point in time, it was generally acknowledged there were too many staff undertaking administrative jobs, but this was considered the inevitable result of a 'baby-boom' in

the office. Once the children were a bit older so that mothers could engage in fieldwork again, they found it easier to be accepted as figures of authority in the communities and to identify with women clients in the villages.⁸ Motherhood is more constitutive of NGO work than fatherhood. Young children interfere only minimally in the availability of their fathers for work and travelling. Since CWNGO is an all-woman organization, parenthood plays a major role in office life compared to so-called mixed NGOs. This is not just the result of a particular staff composition, but also stems from the feminist ideology of the organization. While some of the mixed NGOs maintain policies to restrict their (female) staff from bringing children, the CWNGO management stipulated that their office should be child and mother friendly. In the course of time this resulted in the unintended consequence that all staff started to bring small children, including the unmarried women who brought nephews and nieces. They were either asked by relatives to baby-sit, knowing the opportunities in the CWNGO office, or they just wanted to join the ongoing 'baby show', if only with a borrowed child. When the number of children in the office continued to expand, the policy changed and children's access became restricted to staff children only.

Finally, I should mention here the two lesbians in the office. They were both active in a lesbian organization demanding a lot of their time and absorbing much of their interest. In the office they found space to discuss their sexuality and relations, and apart from the never-ending jokes, they organized several discussion activities on lesbianism. Since many foreign visitors were interested to learn about lesbian experiences and activism, they found it easy to network with visitors in the office (one of them even had a love relationship with a foreign visitor). Just like *Manang Jenny* was the token 'indigenous woman', the lesbians seemed to be the token of feminist identity of the NGO. These two women found part of their motivation to work with indigenous women in their fascination with lesbian indigenous experiences. The women of the regional lesbian organization were convinced that indigenous women, not being tainted by Hispanic colonial history, were more likely to be lesbian than lowland Philippine women. This belief had taken mythical proportions. One version of the myth told of a community in the interior of the Cordillera where women were predominantly lesbian. The location of this utopia was unknown. Another version of the story pinpointed the place in a particular municipality, and one of the CWNGO staff members cherished a dream of going to this place to do research.

Economic differentiation and livelihood

Finally, economic differentiation accounts for some of the networking activities of staff members in CWNGO. The salary and allowances of staff members differed to the extent that the director earned more or less twice as much as the lowest salary. The differentiation was based on a rating of job description, education, age, years of service and family composition. In practice, most staff members earned more or less the same. Although differentiation on the basis of salaries was thus reasonable, staff members' economic positions were stratified due to other sources of income and

their family composition. When we compare Violet and Minda, the difference becomes clear. Violet had a salaried husband and a number of relatives in the States that supported them and their two children. Minda's husband was unemployed and they relied with their four children on her income.

The economic situation of staff members interfered with office life, since those who were hard up financially were always looking for sidelines to supplement their income. Economic concerns for them formed a major topic of conversation and they often sat together to scheme ways of obtaining a little extra money. Staff brought clothes or other items to the office to sell, including sweets or pastry during office meetings, and spent part of their working days arranging their additional activities. These activities also entered the office administration. Transactions among the staff could be settled through the administration of salary payments. One day, for example, Aster returned from the province with 10 kilo of oranges that she had purchased at a bargain price in a local market. She resold the oranges at a modest profit to the other staff members. Payment was administered through the salaries. As a result, salary calculations every month became very complicated due to the small loans and payments that occurred throughout the month.

Analysis

Taken together, these factors provide insight into the relative importance of management in influencing the way in which staff members perceive of and identify with the NGO. The analysis of social networks shows that the influence of management actors is not just based on the authority and discretion they command on the basis of their position. It is multiplied because they are situated at the nodal points of many of the social networks in the office. Because of their political backgrounds they are well prepared for developing policies. They are the oldest members of the organization, which demands respect from the younger staff members. They have the longest involvement in the NGO and, over time, have developed multiple ties with staff members. This starts at the moment of hiring new staff. All staff members enter the office through one of the management committee members. As a result, they feel a moral obligation or *utang na loob* to respect them throughout the years. Most staff members are *Kankanaey* speaking and the management often knows their family in the province. All these elements substantiate the importance of the influence of the management in the office.

However, the discussion at the same time points to the limitation of management to monopolize the meaning of the organization. Firstly, non-management actors are also engaged in networking and continuously redefine their identification with the organization, their motivation, and the discursive legitimation of programmes and practices. Since these staff members are most responsible for the everyday wheeling and dealing with NGO clients and the implementation of programmes and campaigns, their interpretations have a large imprint on the outcome of what the NGO is and does. Secondly, the members of the management committee do not always appear as a unit, because of their different involvement in organizational life. The director of the NGO, Amanda, had individual ties with all staff members but

was not much involved in everyday networking activities outside of the management committee due to her many commitments in Manila and abroad. This significantly limited her control of the day-to-day activities in the office. Violet and Minda were both part of the management committee, but their positioning in the social networks in the office was quite different. In many respects, Minda had more in common with middle level staff members with whom she discussed family affairs and her economic hardships than with Violet. Violet was more involved in political networks, partly because of her husband, and had more space to engage with the single women because a nanny often took care of her children. As a result, the management did not act as a unitary actor with a clear vision, capable of imposing itself on other staff members. The ambiguities of their partly contradictory perceptions left substantial room for manoeuvre for other staff members to negotiate the meaning of the organization.

The social networks in the office were organized around different dimensions, resulting both in overlap and segmentation. As a result, there were no marked cleavages between groups within the office. This provides a clue as to how the organization arrives at a certain cohesion. Because of the interweaving of many networks the NGO actors arrived at a certain shared understanding of the organization. They did not develop the same perspective, but due to these entwinements they arrived at an intimate knowledge about each other's backgrounds and perceptions that allowed them at least to have a workable relation in which they could read each other's meanings and respond accordingly. Although management actors were more influential than others, they certainly were not the manufacturers of the organization's meaning. The everyday practices of the organization were beyond anybody's making.

Questions of Philippine culture in the office

After having analyzed processes of multiple realities and ordering in locales and social networks, here I want to discuss the issue of how cultural institutions order everyday NGO practices. I find the concept of culture a tricky one. It often enters discussions on development with a negative connotation, either as a residual explanation for everything that does not appear rational, or as a disturbance of planned development (Crewe and Harrison 1998: 43-8). I also find it problematic that discontinuities at cultural interfaces are normally ascribed to the culture of the 'other', such as during expatriate meetings where we usually explained our experiences in terms of Filipino culture, and not our own. In social theory culture is often used in a structural way, as a system of meaning that provides the infrastructure for social relations and interaction. At the other extreme, we find notions of culture in organizations as highly 'makeable', as a system of meaning that can and should be directed by management. Both positions sit uncomfortably with an actor-oriented approach, and that is perhaps why many works in this tradition avoid the concept altogether. However, as I will explain, I found cultural patterns an

important aspect of the everyday office life of CWNGO and therefore feel compelled to include it in the analysis.

Linda Smircich has given the following overview of theoretical strands regarding culture in organizations (Smircich 1983). An extensive body of literature in the field of comparative management (popular among multinational companies) considers culture as an independent variable invading organizations. According to this perspective culture in society shapes the character of organizations. A second position looks at culture *within* organizations and is interested in questions of how organizations produce culture. These studies conceive of culture as shared key values and beliefs, a "glue that holds an organization together" (*ibid.*: 344). This is where we find ideas on how to mould and shape internal culture in particular ways consistent with managerial purposes. A third line of thinking "leaves behind the view that culture is something an organization *has*, in favour of the view that culture is something an organization *is*" (*ibid.*: 347). In this line, "the researcher's attention shifts from concerns about what organizations accomplish and how they may accomplish it more efficiently, to how organization is accomplished and what does it mean to be organized?" (*ibid.*: 353). Instead of searching for a property of organizations, the question of culture then becomes a quest for understanding how things, events and interactions come to be meaningful. In this constructivist view, modern organization with its meetings and reliance on statistics is as cultural as the former headhunting practices of the Cordillera. As Morgan (1986) says, "it directs attention to the symbolic or even 'magical' significance of even the most rational aspect of organizational life" (Morgan 1986: 135).

I adhere to this constructivist position. Taking this perspective, I am nonetheless interested to know how certain Philippine cultural institutions play a role in office life. It indubitably makes a difference that the NGO I concentrate upon is a *Filipino* NGO (leaving aside for the moment regional variations in the country). When I had spent some time in the Philippines I started to notice and become accustomed to certain recurring patterns in the way staff members in the office behaved. It was only when reading books on Filipino values in work situations that I came to learn labels applied to these patterns.⁹ Let me elaborate on two of them. The first one is *Pakiramdam*, a *Tagalog* term that means "feeling the other". It denotes the tendency to act according to what one thinks is the desire of the higher-ups or those in authority (Andres 1988: 90). The second is *Pakikisama* which refers to "the tendency to conform or give concession to the wishes of the group to maintain smooth interpersonal relations with them" (*ibid.*: 28). *Pakikisama* denotes belonging to and sharing loyalty to a group but it also comprises sanctioning those who do not conform. An important aspect of smooth social relations is that one needs to preserve other people's personal dignity and self-esteem (Andres 1989: 137). Another is that challenging authority is equally geared towards the maintenance of smooth relations, such as by practices of avoidance or by making *tampu*, which stands for a large range of 'sulking behaviour' (Mulder 1997: 35).

The notion of *Pakiramdam* obviously ordered discussions during meetings, when in most cases staff members refrained from speaking unless they had a prior idea of the position of the management on the issue. It was also constitutive of how staff

members viewed the organization and even each other. One of the aspects of office life that initially amazed me was how fast particular staff could rise and fall in what seemed like an office-wide appreciation. One case in point was Maribel. Maribel was the young, skilful editor of the NGO's magazine. One day, a problem occurred when she wrote a feature on an indigenous woman leader in the region containing some critical quotes from this person about the NGO Consortium. The office management decided to return the entire edition to the print shop and have it removed. And they were very angry with Maribel. One of them suggested she had purposefully tried to damage the organization's reputation. In a matter of days, the atmosphere turned against Maribel. Different staff members uttered comments that she was *makulit* (stubborn) and that they did not like her manners. When some time later Maribel announced she was going back to college, nobody seemed to regret her departure. Instead, it was suggested it was a sign of 'sneakyness', since "she must have planned this for some time, but never mentioned it". During the period of my research, several other staff members, just like Maribel, fell into rapid disgrace. This happened after management actors signalled their dislike of these staff members, thereby apparently generating organization-wide critique, or at least legitimating the overt expression of reservations already held by lower staff members.

Pakikisama was also easy to recognize in numerous office practices. A strong forging of groups was apparent in 'pacts' to either stay together or resign. Staff members could feel 'betrayed' when a colleague resigned. On one occasion, a staff member who had resigned later withdrew her resignation because, as she explained, "Cora [her colleague/friend] wants to stay until the end of the year, so I decided to stay with her". The other aspect of *Pakikisama*, namely that of enforcing group conformation, was enacted when staff members treated each other very harshly, even outside of the knowledge or consent of the management. One day, for example, a staff member cancelled a field trip because she had been held up at home due to the incessant rains, and did not have dry clothes to bring along. Even though the management didn't know about this, when she came to the office, a group of three staff members were waiting to reprimand her and this was the occasion to give her a strong sermon about her obligations and general attitude. Finally, when the 'code' of preserving another person's dignity by avoiding public criticism of her was breached, this could lead to an instant decision to resign. In several cases, staff members resigned even though they had no prospects for immediate alternative means of livelihood.

Although practices like *Pakiramdam* and *Pakikisama* were constitutive of everyday relations in the office, they did not operate like 'rules' of the game. There were just too many exceptions to make this true. While, for example, lower staff members enacted the disapproval of management actors with regard to certain staff members, they refrained from doing so with others. Some staff members subject to management criticism were openly defended, some issues evoked heavy discussion without regard for smooth relations, and diversity among staff members often accounted for conflicting values. There were always, in other words, alternative possibilities for response. Organization practices were therefore not *invaded* by Philippine culture, but NGO actors *drew* on (dominant) Philippine culture among

other things. This was especially apparent in ambiguities in management styles in the office.

Management ambiguities

Management styles in the office were ambiguous because they drew on a number of different discourses. To begin with, the NGOs provided a conscious alternative to government bureaucracies. They rejected for instance the dress code and the many status symbols associated with rank in bureaucracies. Belonging to the National Democratic movement reinforced hierarchical tendencies in the office, but altered them in the process. The National Democratic movement was organized in the top-down style deemed typical of communist organizations. This was especially the case for the underground movement, where it was exacerbated by strong security concerns. NGOs had taken over some of this style, by organizing themselves into a Consortium whose authority was higher than that of the management of any one individual NGO.

The tendency towards hierarchy was counterbalanced by ideas prevailing in the office that were drawn from feminist, participatory and indigenous discourses; and discourses on management. Organizing work, especially in the villages, required initiative and creativity and management actors often said they needed staff who could work independently and use their own discretion. They often lamented about the Philippine educational system which, according to one of them, "does not teach students to think but only to obey". Feminist, participatory discourses resulted in notions of equality and the need for sharing experiences and opinions. During staff meetings, management actors always invited staff to speak out and give their opinions. Indigenous discourse found interpretation in notions of talking until consensus was reached and was thus used as an alternative for management by decree.

This amalgam of discourses led to ambiguity. This was perhaps frustrating, for example when staff members like Susan found their expectations to be included in policy discussions unfulfilled. It also gave room for manoeuvre and provided a repertoire of alternatives that management and staff alike used to negotiate organizational meaning. Since there were always alternatives, this implied that staff members acting according to cultural institutions, for example by 'feeling the other' or 'making *tampu*', were not merely following rules but were *enacting* these practices.

The importance of jokes and viewing culture as a verb

In every situation, NGO actors made use of alternative options to respond. Following certain cultural practices was therefore not automatic but an expression of human agency. Actors invoked these practices in certain situations and not others. Even though reflection about the responses may not have been conscious all the time, staff members did choose among alternative options. In many instances, they habitually resorted to patterns based on particular familiar practices they had grown up with. Without claiming that all responses were necessarily rational, I must add that these

practices were largely effective in facilitating everyday organizational life. Because they referred to shared notions, others could easily read the meaning of certain behaviour, and they brought about a certain ordering in the complexities of the organization. The notion that both the following and the not-following of cultural practices signals agency was particularly clear in the use of jokes. Jokes were a culturally grey area. They had different faces. At times, they were used to blow off steam in a mild way while maintaining smooth relations and confirming ongoing hierarchies. However, there were also jokes that overstepped boundaries and implicitly criticized particular practices in such a way that staff members just got away with it and those addressed just saved face. In the latter cases, jokes could lead to having particular issues put on the 'agenda' for change. Making jokes could be both the enactment of and a challenge to dominant understandings of the organization, like the irony analyzed extensively by Gabriel Torres (1994). Those listening to the jokes used their agency to make out the difference between the two.

The resulting image is a view of culture as a process. Basing herself on Street (1993), Susan Wright takes the position that culture must be seen as a verb instead of a noun, an active process of meaning-making and contestation over definition (Wright 1994: 27). Contestation over the meaning of things and interaction draws on a repertoire of alternative discourses, including (dominant) cultural institutions, and is mediated by agency. No single actor (such as the management) has the prerogative in making culture. Culture as a process is continuously emerging and therefore appears to be self-generating. We have to be careful, however, not to misunderstand the term 'self-generating' as something that happens outside the agency of the actors involved. The way in which I discussed the above, showed how actors' agency and processes of enrolment and power shaped the multiple and contested meanings of organization. The outcome of these processes were emergent, in the sense that nobody could predict or control them.

Conclusion

I started this chapter with the notion that all NGO actors are engaged in reflecting on their work and interpreting events related to it. Due to differential backgrounds, life worlds, institutional histories and experiences with clients, diversity among staff members defies a simple categorization of management versus the rest. NGOs are more complex than that. When we take the multiple realities of NGOs as the starting point of analysis, the ordering of NGO practices becomes a matter for investigation and explanation. In the idea of modern rational organizations, ordering is effected by policies, organizational structure, regulations, minutes of meetings and other paraphernalia. Although these act as points of reference for actors in the organization, it has lately been acknowledged that these are only effective through the meaning they are endowed with by actors. For this reason, cultural analysis of organizations has become increasingly popular.

In cultural analysis, ordering is achieved through “patterns of symbolic relationships and meanings sustained through the continued processes of human interaction” (Smircich 1983: 353). However, cultural analysis all too often slips into the notion that underneath apparent diversities there operates, in the words of Morgan, a “much deeper and all-pervasive system of meaning” (Morgan 1986: 133). I do not agree with this position on two counts. Firstly, I think there is no single system of meaning: no matter how deep we dig there are always multiple realities. Secondly, these systems do not impose themselves on human beings, but are mediated and negotiated through people’s agency.

In this chapter I looked at discontinuities and partial ordering through locales, social networks and cultural practices. In all these domains, ordering processes do not just happen. NGO actors invoke, negotiate and manipulate the meaning of these in their everyday practices. Although there is ordering, there is never order, ‘systems’ of meaning never attain coherence and closure. NGOs are continuously reconstituted, but not through orchestrated processes. They emerge through the negotiation of meaning in the minutiae of everyday life, and all NGO actors are involved in these negotiations.

Notes

¹ This section presents the office as it operated until mid-1995. After that time, the number of Baguio-based staff was reduced, and CWNGO started to share offices with another NGO of the Consortium.

² This section is partly based on a series of taped interviews with Baguio-based and provincial staff members of CWNGO, held in the first half of 1994.

³ As far as I know, these deliberations never resulted in a revenge killing.

⁴ For a review of discussions on how bureaucrats construct their clients see Wright 1994: 161-8; for discussions on how field workers arrive at differentiated client constructions, see de Vries 1992a and Arce 1993.

⁵ Unmarried staff members did not have to reckon with a husband, but were nonetheless affected by their family relations. There were several staff like Susan, who kept the nature of their job a secret from their relatives because they feared their family would not approve, and others who were put under constant pressure to resign. The status of staff members' families also affected their work in the communities. As I elaborated in chapter 5 the status of their family could considerably add to the weight of a particular staff member in the community.

⁶ For a discussion on the mixed blessings of close family ties in the Philippines, see: Ramirez 1984.

⁷ The stretching of NGO management discretion to the private lives of staff members is partly related to the tradition of the National Democratic movement, which developed a code of conduct for its members, for example by regulating courtship, and prohibiting sexual relations before marriage. Although the NGOs do not adhere to this code, the history of its practices make this kind of interference more acceptable.

⁸ Note that being single does not automatically preclude caring responsibilities. Several singles had nieces, nephews or ailing parents to take care of. There were, however, other restrictions they had to take into account. It was more difficult to escape the confined roles and expectations related to girls in the villages and they were more vulnerable to sexual harassment. Single women could more easily be deployed in the field.

⁹ Notions about Filipino values are usually grounded in the organization of the family, which is considered *the* central Philippine institution. Formal relations of hierarchy and relations based on moral obligations and social ties are both part of the organization of the family. It is perceived that hierarchy is especially represented by the authority of the father and by ranking of siblings according to age (by using special addresses for older or younger siblings, for example). Relations on the basis of moral obligations are represented by the never-fulfilled gratitude and obligations of children towards their mothers (Mulder 1997). Although this general notion gives a certain idea of particular institutions, we have to be aware that in practice many variations occur and that people have a range of alternative options to deal with them. Everyday resistance and negotiation over these institutions abound, of which culture is also tolerant.



8

NGO Leaders: A Social Analysis of 'Fairly Unusual Human Beings'

This chapter deals with NGO leaders. In the previous chapter, I analysed the role of NGO management in ordering processes *within* these organizations. Here I focus on the question of how NGO leaders operate successfully at NGO interfaces, among others, with funding agencies. Looking at NGO literature, NGO personalities and leaders appear as very important, albeit little researched (Hailey 1999: 3). On the basis of writings and a lot of mainly anecdotal references, it seems that the typical image of NGO leaders has undergone some changes. Throughout these changing images, their importance has never been questioned.

Initially, NGO leaders were uncritically admired as visionary, inspirational leaders providing alternative notions of development. As Ekins puts it "This 'new type of activist' is a *fairly unusual human being*: someone with a clear intellectual grasp of social trends and forces, an understanding of commercial and local and national bureaucratic processes, an empathy with and sensitivity to the poor and, usually, a willingness to live on a low income" (Ekins 1992: 201, italics added). This image of the visionary leader has been dented by notions of NGO leaders as 'charismatic autocrats', or what is called the 'guru syndrome'. As John Hailey summarizes the notion: "on the one hand such leaders have demonstrated a drive and commitment, and a remarkable ability to mobilize people and resources. On the other they are criticized for dominating organizations, being unaccountable, and failing to adapt to changing circumstances" (Hailey 1999: 3). Recently, research on NGO leadership has deconstructed the notion of charismatic autocrat. On the basis of research into successful South Asian NGO founders, John Hailey identifies their leadership style as "value-driven, knowledge-based, and responsive" (*ibid.*: 9). This author concludes

that these people are "genuine development leaders". Leaders are characterized by "their strong personal values; their willingness to experiment and apply new technologies or learning; and their ability to actively engage in the external environment and respond to change" (*ibid.*: 9).

Clearly, NGO managers who inspire writing about leadership have remarkable personalities. Yet, I think we have to be careful not to focus too much on personalities, skills and leadership styles and thus fail to take into account a social analysis of leadership. Reflection on leadership should be grounded in an analysis of the meaning and working of NGOs. This chapter first presents some of the discussions on leadership in recent organizational sociology and development literature and then focuses on one particular NGO leader, whom I call Amanda. She was the director of CWNGO at the time of my fieldwork. Let me first give her story, see how she is constituted as a leader and how she herself defines her leadership. I will then identify those practices in different domains of the NGO that to my mind make her a successful leader. The latter part of the chapter reflects on what the story of Amanda means for the conceptualization of NGO leadership. Rather than adopting such a catch phrase as 'development leaders', I prefer the term 'brokers of meaning'.

Leadership in organization studies

In a review of leadership studies, Alan Bryman (1996) identifies four stages in leadership theory and research in which certain aspects gained prominence in the field. Until the 1950s leadership studies predominantly focused on 'traits' of (male!) leaders. The idea was that leaders were born and had certain physical traits, particular abilities and personality characteristics. Leaders, for example, were intelligent, masculine and dominant. Although this kind of trait research continues to some extent to the present, it has been overshadowed since the 1950s by the 'style' approach. Accordingly, leaders are considered to be nurtured and can be trained to adopt an appropriate leadership style. By the end of the 1960s, style research was likewise overtaken by 'contingency' models of leadership that placed situational factors at the centre of any understanding of leadership. The idea behind this kind of research is to specify those situational variables that moderate the effectiveness of different leadership approaches. Finally, in the 1980s several new approaches emerged that can together be labelled as the 'New Leadership Approach'. This approach implied a whole new definition of leadership.

Until then, leadership was conceived of as a capacity to *influence* group activity. A typical definition of earlier approaches was, for example, that leadership "may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement" (Stogdill 1950, quoted in Bryman, 1996: 276). In the 1980s the conception of leadership changed towards the capacity to *manage meaning*. Concepts emerged like 'transformational' leadership, 'charismatic' leadership, and 'visionary' leadership. These labels conveyed a concep-

tion of the leader as "someone who defines organizational reality through the articulation of a vision which is a reflection of how he or she defines an organization's mission and the values which will support it" (Bryman 1996: 281). The new leadership approaches direct attention to the importance of meaning and thus to the social construction of organization. However, they are still based on a unitary, leader-centred image of organization. That is, they assume that in order to be effective organizations require leaders to introduce and manage a shared understanding of the meaning of the organization. However, in the 1990s, this perspective on organization was eroded by various researchers. Increasingly, studies pointed to the de-centred nature of organizations: the importance of individual leaders appears to be far less important than assumed by new leadership proponents.

Indeed, in the previous chapter I discussed processes of meaning making in an NGO. The role of management was substantial, but not decisive in ordering processes in CWNGO. The perspective of leadership as managing the meaning of organization was sobered and replaced by the idea of organizational meanings as never-closing and never-entirely-orchestrated. This was related to the fact that all NGO actors reflect about the nature of the NGO, to the existence of the multi-tiered networks and relationships in the organization, and to the ambiguities resulting from a multiplicity of discourses and cultural repertoires upon which NGO actors draw. The question is how to conceive of leadership in this de-centred view of organizations? What about the importance attached to NGO leaders? It is received wisdom to recognize that NGOs stand or fall by virtue of their leaders. Though this may partly be a myth, I would not dare to suggest it is entirely illusionary. I assume therefore that there is at least partial substance to the general claim that NGO leaders are decisive. However, as I stipulated in the previous chapter, the importance of NGO leaders cannot be a starting point or taken for granted; it has to be explained.

I already began in the last chapter to explain the influence of management within the organization. In the first place, we should not over-attach importance to processes of meaning. Management does not rely completely on *enrolling* staff members into an acceptance of certain understandings of the organization. Management can mould the organization by virtue of its *discretions*, such as hiring and firing and deciding on the allocation of money. In the second place, I substantiated the apparent power of management personnel to define meaning in the organization by pointing to facilitating aspects in their backgrounds, institutional history, and positioning at nodal points of a diversity of social networks in the office.

In this chapter, I shall shift the focus to domains of action outside the NGO office. I follow an NGO leader at different interfaces where she represents her organization. At these interfaces she presents and enacts particular images of the NGO and negotiates its meaning with different stakeholders. One problem with literature that conceives of leadership as 'the power to define meaning' is that it does not take into account the fact that leaders convey different meanings to different audiences. In other words, it does not reckon with the issue of multiple realities. The paradox of the central importance of leadership in de-centred NGOs may be related to this matter. When NGO leaders are seen as representing their organization, and no distinction is made between their presentation and the 'real thing', they

automatically appear to dominate processes of meaning making in the organization. Perhaps, however, their strength lies not in managing values within the NGO but in presenting a believable and coherent organization to observers and stakeholders.

Composing a life

As this section will show, Amanda is a perfect illustration of the "unusual human beings" identified by Paul Ekins (1992) as the new NGO leaders. She has set up several successful NGOs and has rapidly gained prominence in those international venues where NGO activists negotiate new world orders. Amanda was the manager of CWNGO during most of my three years of fieldwork with this organization. I had met her several years previously through a mutual friend, and she invited me to come and work with the NGO. During my fieldwork, Amanda was mostly on the move but there were several periods in which we worked together and developed a strong bond of friendship. I admire Amanda. She has a quick intelligence, a great sense of humour and is amazingly optimistic and confident that seemingly insurmountable obstacles can be overcome. It was always obvious to both of us that she should be an important part of my analysis of the NGO and she willingly underwent a number of interviews. Nonetheless, it has taken me several years to be able to sit down and turn her into a figure on paper. The chapter was the last to be drafted, just before completing the entire thesis. It is always somewhat inhibiting and painful, but especially so for a close friend, to capture someone in the depersonalising concepts of sociology.

Let me first introduce Amanda by giving some excerpts from her life story. Life histories give us a window through which to unravel how people are constituted as social actors. Although the genetic make-up of people certainly contributes to their abilities and personality, these are further shaped throughout their lives. Life histories also give insight into the importance of social networks in constituting a person's life path, they "make it possible to look at actual decisions and actions, and to perceive behind these practices the network of social relations which allowed them to take place" (Bertaux-Wiame 1981: 264). Finally, life histories give ideas about the discursive repertoires that actors develop through which they come to consider what they find important and what they can do to achieve it.

Mary Bateson looks at life-histories to see how people *compose* their lives. This author examines how actors 'build' their lives by responding to the variegated demands of life. Life appears in her work as an "improvisatory art, as the ways we combine familiar and unfamiliar components in response to new situations" (Bateson 1990: 3). As she points out, the need to compose life is increasingly common. Fewer and fewer people in present-day societies can rely on a life path that is carved out for them by following the footsteps of their parents, or by hooking up to a single career perspective. However, it is even more apparent with women combining work and caring, and characteristic of those societies where discontinuities and insecurities are the order of the day and where education and career opportunities are not readily

generated. The way Amanda composes her life, as many NGO leaders bred from these kinds of conditions do, tells us a lot about what she thinks about the world around her and how she improvises encounters at NGO interfaces.

Growing up

Amanda was born in Baguio City as the daughter of an Anglican priest and a nurse. Both her parents come from a town in Mountain Province and belong to the first generation of educated Igorots. Amanda is the fourth of nine children. As a priest, her father was regularly transferred and so Amanda lived in different parts of the Cordillera. This family places a high value on education, and Amanda explains her later urge to collect books, and to endorse projects to supply barrio schools with books, as stemming from her youth, "when we always had plenty of books in the house". Thanks to this intellectual upbringing (and probably the mental capacities of a family that is legendary in the region) one after the other of the children, including Amanda, gained scholarships to an outstanding school – the Philippine Science High School in Manila, which brought her to the capital in 1966. One of her friends from Besao moved at the same time, and the two of them had a great time enjoying Manila life. Later, this friend, Minda, worked with Amanda in several of the NGOs that she helped to found.

Apart from an education, attending the Philippine Science High School brought Amanda three things. The school educates the country's elite and this provided her with a social network that later in life gave her access to a range of highly positioned people in the country. More important at that time was the emerging movement for nationalism. The school was one of the first places in the country where lectures were organized about "what was really happening to Philippine Society" and many students turned activist. Her interest in the movement was endorsed by her elder sister who had become a 'first-day activist'. Practically all her siblings later became active in the National Democratic movement. Finally, she experienced discrimination and began to realize that Igorots were considered a cultural minority. One of the incidents she remembers is of a history teacher explaining that Igorots lived in trees. "So I thought my God, no wonder my classmates think like this, when the teacher is already so ignorant".

By the time Amanda finished High School, the student movement of the 1960s was at its height. Although she had set her mind on studying anthropology, she decided to become a nurse instead. Nursing schools provided students with free board and lodging. Anticipating that she might not finish the course like so many of her friends who had already turned full-time activists, she did not want to rely economically on her parents and feel a sense of obligation to complete her entire studies. Besides, nursing fitted well into her revolutionary ideas. Both in her college years and during the period she undertook practical nurses training in urban poor areas she was an active political organizer. She focused on the mobilization of other Igorots for the nationalist movement, whom she found mainly among seminarian student priests. This resulted in setting up a Cordillera youth organization. When this youth organization held its first congress in the Cordillera in 1972, an American

historian -William Henry Scott- spoke of the "Creation of the Cultural Minorities". This gave an important impetus to the organization to begin addressing the specific problems faced by indigenous people, then referred to as national minorities.

Becoming an NGO activist

The final part of a nurse's training consists of a six-month practical period spent in a rural area, for which she moved to a remote place in Mountain Province. On arriving in this place she found she was pregnant. Her boyfriend, Joey, was a union organizer in Manila and after her practical work she joined him. They married and she had her baby. She lived with her mother-in-law but found it hell. After three months she packed her things and returned home to her parents in the Cordillera. Then, when Joey was transferred to Ilocos, in the North, she joined him, but again returned home after three months because she could not adjust to the heat. She was then offered the opportunity to set up a community-based health programme in one of the villages in the Cordillera, which she accepted. Joey decided to follow her and they had been living there for three years when their house was raided by the military, who arrested a visitor suspected of belonging to the NPA. After this, it was not safe for them to stay and so they moved to Baguio City, where they had another three children.

In Baguio, Joey concentrated on organizing mineworkers in the vicinity of the city. Amanda combined child care with organizing and helping to set up new organizations. She started with professionals in the health institutions. Over the years community-based health programmes had emerged in the different provinces directed by doctors from Baguio. In 1983, this resulted in one of the first NGOs for community-based health work in the region. Amanda was central in building this NGO, but at the same time she felt her capacity was limited if she only worked in the health sector. So once a director was found for the new NGO, Amanda moved on to organize what were called the 'middle forces', a term that referred to city-based, middle-class professionals. She mainly worked through church channels. She believed she was very effective in working with the church due to her background as the daughter of a priest, and because she had already built good contacts with the National Council of Churches, while organizing students of the seminaries in Manila during her college years. She was involved with the radicalization of the churches' own programmes¹ and helped to set up another region-wide development NGO.

In 1984, Amanda helped to set up yet another new organization, an NGO for lay church workers. This time she engaged herself full-time and became the programme co-ordinator. Like the other NGOs, the organization was embedded in the National Democratic movement and she took up the position as part of her political work. Using the NGO format gave them the necessary logistics, since it was the only way to access funding.

"Funding agencies like to see there is a Board of Directors and a staff, and because People's Organizations do not have those things they can not apply for funding. And we needed the infrastructure. When you just depend on what is there, you cannot control the direction it is going to

take. You have to be able to invite a priest and get together for an education session, a workshop, and the only way to do that is by setting up an NGO.”

Because Amanda had her links with the National Council of Churches, one of the key endorsing bodies for funding agencies, it was not difficult for her to obtain funds.

Starting women's work

After two years working for the lay church workers' programme, Amanda set up an NGO for organizing women, that would soon become CWNGO. The initial costs of reproducing materials and research were covered by the church workers' NGO. Two years later CWNGO was in good enough shape to acquire funding of its own (see below). Before starting this work, Amanda had never given much thought to women's questions. Only when tasked to organize women did she start to read feminist literature. This resonated with several of her own ideas about the hardship of life for women in the Cordillera. It also gave new meaning to some of her own experiences in struggling to combine motherhood with political work. She had always tried to be as effective as she could, but had received comments that made her feel political leaders thought her work trivial and insignificant, and that no account was taken of the demands that motherhood put upon her. She was also confronted with double moral standards in the movement when, after a brief romantic involvement with another man (also married), she was barred from taking on a higher position, while he was allowed to continue his political career without interruption.

Once CWNGO acquired funding, the programme expanded rapidly (see chapter 3) and soon offices were established in the different provinces. Gradually, Amanda entered a new domain of work: that of international representation and solidarity. As early as 1980, she was invited to a Conference of the World Council of Churches in Australia to talk about her community-based health programme. Then, in 1988, she was asked to represent the national women's coalition GABRIELA, on a speaking tour as part of the Women-and-International-Debt campaign in the Netherlands. In 1989 she attended her first international conference for indigenous women in Australia, and became part of the 'continuing committee' that organized the next conference in Norway. By then, CWNGO had organized an international conference in Baguio, at which the Asia Indigenous Women Network (AIWN) was formed. Work on international indigenous women culminated in the 1995 international conference in Beijing, where Amanda convened, on behalf of AIWN, a number of activities in the NGO Forum resulting in the "Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women".

Moving international

Her international involvement with indigenous women soon brought Amanda into UN activities, and before long her international work had snowballed. As an officer

of the Cordillera People's Alliance she often represented the region in international events, and she increasingly received personal invitations. She was invited to all major UN conferences, played a role in several committees, and received more invitations than she could handle from all over the world to attend national conferences or undertake speaking tours. Her involvement in indigenous affairs led her to specialize in sustainable development, intellectual property rights, and a range of issues related to the ordering of the globalized economy through institutions like GATT and WTO. In 1994, she asked for a year's leave of absence from CWNGO to concentrate on her international work. At the end of that year, a most painful episode followed, after which she parted ways with the political movement she had belonged to for more than 20 years.

Amanda has always defined her activities as being within the National Democratic movement, but she has never wanted to be completely confined to the strict co-ordination and stringent political framework. For several years this worked out all right. However, the period that Amanda's work moved into ever-widening orbits coincided exactly with the regrouping of the National Democratic movement in order to go 'back to its basics' (see chapter 3). This led to mounting problems. While Amanda enthusiastically explored new ideas and venues, she did not want to submit herself to the long meetings discussing intensified co-ordination structures. She was also being increasingly criticized for taking political positions in international arenas without consulting the organization back home. They considered her international work 'reformist' and some people suggested that she had deliberately introduced feminist perspectives into women's work in the region in order to divide the movement. Yet, Amanda thought her work was still compatible with the National Democratic political movement. She felt that "having been moulded within the movement, and with her heart in the right issues, and acting in its spirit" she should be trusted. However, she felt she had lost the "moral authority" to have her ideas seriously considered. Finally, she decided to maintain a working relationship with people in the movement, but to organize her own work outside of it.

Parting ways with the National Democratic movement was painful, not in the least because it changed (at least temporarily) her relationship with most of her siblings, their spouses, as well as many of her friends. By this time, however, she had developed an extensive social network in the international NGO world. With some of her international friends she had deliberated for some time about setting up an international NGO to facilitate the activities of indigenous peoples in international arenas and to inform them of the implications of international developments for their situation. Amanda set up this NGO in Baguio City, and quickly initiated a programme to run with 15 staff members.

Years before, Amanda could not have imagined how her life would change, nor how many changing circumstances she would have to respond to. She adjusted her study plans with the introduction of Martial Law, responded to finding herself pregnant, to having to abandon the local health programme after her house was raided, and to feminist readings redefining her past. And now she had to recompose her life once more after stepping away from the political movement that had been her 'home' since high school. This NGO emerged from the few years of involvement

with international work and was organized around an entirely new social network. And yet, at the same time, the NGO was also an unfolding of earlier commitments and ideas, even of earlier social networks. When the programme was established, she drew her staff primarily from among former friends wishing to change jobs, or drifted away from the National Democratic movement. Like jazz musicians who create new music by reshuffling familiar chords (Bateson 1990: 2), Amanda *improvised* her life in response to changing circumstances. She built on the experiences, people, knowledge and skills that she had assembled around her in the course of time, and recomposed them in order to reweave again and again the fabric of her life. This life history, then, tells us how Amanda lived her life and in the process gained experience, formed ideas and grew into a leader. It does not yet explain how she became effective as a respected NGO representative of indigenous peoples, or what we can learn from her story for a sociological analysis of NGO leaders. For this, I turn to a discussion of Amanda's international work and of the way she deals with funding agencies.

Doing international work

The first international conferences Amanda attended, she simply aimed to tell the Philippine story to an international audience and to mobilize support for the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship, and later for the structural changes that were needed under Aquino. Later she found it more important to "get hold of international processes and the implications of international agreements" in order to report in the Philippines what was going on in international institutions. Soon thereafter, she began increasingly to see her task as actually influencing the outcome of international conferences and policies, and not without success.² She became integrated into some of the official processes of United Nations policy-making and was active in formulating alternative NGO discourses, most notably, as part of a core group that drafted an alternative NGO declaration of the Social Summit. This received hundreds of signatories in the course of a few days, and caught so much attention that a last-minute slot was provided in the Plenary Session of the Summit for Amanda to present the declaration. This was within two years of her first attendance at a UN event. How did she ascend so rapidly in this international arena?

First, I should mention two background elements that facilitated her work: her grassroots experience and her training as a political activist. Amanda was one of the few people in international work that had actually worked for years directly organizing at village level. Moreover, CWNGO is a world-wide pioneer in focusing on women's issues among indigenous peoples.³ So, Amanda had a story to tell that was grounded in experience. This worked in different ways. It gave her confidence, and she found much of value in her own experience to make sense of and evaluate new ideas. It also made her an interesting person for international audiences, and above all a credible representative of indigenous peoples. As she says:

"our experience in the Cordillera is something that had not often been done on this scale. And it is being done where women are in a highly militarized situation and facing extreme poverty. Our experience is quite novel, you know, for a lot of international audiences."⁴

Her decade-long experience as a political activist fed her sharp analytical mind and provided her with a lot of practical skills that turned out to be very useful in international work. As Amanda says: "once you have been there and they sort of know you are effective in terms of writing or lobbying, and you get a reputation for hard work, they ask you back".

Mastering languages of development

It helps, then, to have a story that is grounded in experience and which represents a pioneer NGO. But a story is not a thing, it is a *representation*. The previous chapters have amply shown that there are always multiple stories to tell about the same events and organizations. It is not merely that different people have different interpretations; they change their stories according to different times, places and audiences. We all do, but Amanda had developed this into an artful skill. She realized it was a condition for being effective in the kind of work she was doing, and learnt it mostly during speaking tours. Talking of her first speaking tour, she explained:

"You know, this campaign was really quite educational for me because, in the span of a day, we spoke to different kinds of groups, such as church women and then women belonging to communist or socialist parties. And then again you talk to school kids. That was a very good exercise in terms of how to make your language suit the content of what you are going to say so that you will be understood. It made me better equipped to deal with different audiences. Even when you are asked to talk about a particular issue, radio or newspaper reporters will ask different things in interviews. And of course there's always a mixture of how to integrate the whole issue of women and indigenous peoples."

What Amanda had developed was the skill to gauge rapidly the interest of her audience, to adjust her story to bridge different life worlds, and to convey the meaning of her story in such a way that the notion of common experiences and interests could easily evolve. That she became effective in different arenas is seen in her ability to adopt pertinent discourses and everyday practices to deal with specific situations. Within a short space of time, Amanda became as familiar as any UN bureaucrat with the language in which to coach resolutions and United Nations covenants. And she became equally skilful in knowing the crucial parts of conferences to attend, in what locales to find the people one wished to speak to, how to get enlisted as a speaker, how to circumvent the bureaucracies and how to get press coverage for a particular viewpoint.

What makes her different from a UN bureaucrat is that her experiences are not concentrated only at United Nations interfaces. Her travels take her to local NGOs,

'grass roots' interfaces, governmental meetings, international think tanks, funding agencies, and political groups. The span of her radius of action is rather unique. No-one (except me) in CWNGO was surprised, for example, when in the midst of a meeting in which we were discussing details of programme implementation in the villages, Amanda was called away to a telephone call (in Spanish) from Guatemala. Nobel Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchu was on the line, asking if she could hop on a plane to join the international indigenous fact-finding mission to Chiapas, in Mexico, where the Zapatistas had just initiated their uprising. Like the village women leaders of chapter 4, Amanda may rightly be called an interface expert. Informed from different angles and able to speak in different capacities often gives her an advantage over the specialists she deals with at any one particular interface. Because she moves in different domains of international development, she provides links that prove to be of particular value in circles of international policy-making.

Creating social communities

Being an interface expert is only part of the story. Another important part consists of how leaders are made through and themselves make social networks. Traversing discourses and domains is not an abstract activity but happens through social networks. Amanda could not have achieved her integration into international arenas if she had not acquired the necessary contacts. It was in becoming acquainted with specific actors of international NGOs and indigenous peoples that she was introduced, invited, and endorsed. However, social networks are not simply resources people possess. They are not some kind of social bank account one can draw on whenever necessary.⁵ Instead, I found Amanda and other international NGO actors continuously engaged in *creating* and maintaining personalized relations and social communities. Despite the de-territorialized nature of international arenas, global friendships are forged and social communities flourish. These networks are loosely demarcated and change according to the meeting ground, but they nonetheless evolve community-like features with their own histories, multi-stranded relationships, patterned interactions and the development of hierarchies, competing factions and power games.

They are *functional* communities of people who meet on different occasions, exchange ideas and co-ordinate on strategies. In between events, communication lines are continued through the use of e-mail, fax messages and telephone conversations. At the same time, these communities are turned into *social* communities. When meeting, only part of their interaction concerns the official issues of the day. A large amount of time is devoted to discovering each other's background and discussing everyday politics within the NGO communities. Despite the de-labelling and de-institutionalization of political differentiation, an aspect that seems always under scrutiny is whether international NGO colleagues stem from radical or conservative communities. Discussing politics is not limited to spelling out viewpoints, strategies and controversies but entails a lot of keeping an eye on each other to observe other ways of operating. Information about the kind of hotels people stay in and who sponsored their stay is continuously exchanged and apparently

provides (additional) clues in a continuous process of working out who are valuable and trustworthy partners to link up with for international work and who are better avoided. Sexual innuendo is frequently part of conversation. Several times I heard about a (real or mythical?) woman who, as the story goes, had five children conceived during international events by men of different indigenous backgrounds, thus personally contributing to the "genetic diversity" of the world. I have no idea how many international actors actually develop frequent sexual relationships during their hectic travel schedules. What I did observe, though, is that gossiping about these kinds of relationships keeps everybody busy and seems to be important in strengthening social ties, and, in many cases, is given political significance as well.

It has been suggested that the availability of electronic means of communication facilitates depersonalized, professional NGO intervention in respect to the contestation of issues of global development and world economic growth. From my observations, however, the selection of precisely what information and messages are read from among the barrage of electronic communications, will depend on the identity of the sender. Personal social networks and criteria remain important elements in the use of electronic mail, mailing lists and web sites. The ways these are put to use contributes to the forging of social communities. Apart from the business at hand, messages often contain personal information, gossip, and exchanges on everyday politics. News can travel around the world in a matter of hours. The types of social communities that are created through a combination of 'virtual communities' and infrequent face-to-face encounters are meaningful. They produce what Appadurai calls neighbourhoods (Appadurai 1995). To a certain extent they become "life worlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by relatively known and shared histories, and by collectively traversed and legible spaces and places" (*ibid.*: 215). Appadurai points out that virtual neighbourhoods of international electronic communications can have a significant meaning for struggles taking place in 'real' neighbourhoods. Indeed, ideas and discourses generated in international social communities find their ways to the respective localities of the participants.

It is through the creation of social communities that NGO concerted action is realized, even though different actors only actually meet on brief occasions. In the months building up to the international women's conference in Beijing, a core group of six indigenous women evolved almost without deliberation. They knew each other from previous events and through brief exchanges of e-mails and arrived in Beijing with a similar understanding of what had to be done. They availed of certain shared routines. For example, the first thing they did when meeting was to note down their respective telephone numbers in the hotels where they were staying. Although they found time to chat, their encounters were at the same time characterized by highly efficient, almost shorthand, consultations. "Let's involve (x) person". "Yes, she was also very good at (x) event, do you have her phone number?" "Can you have a draft declaration ready tomorrow, because I am speaking at (x) forum?" "Have you heard, (x) requested a slot in the official conference. Imagine, she is not even indigenous. I think we should endorse (y) instead". "Are you coming to the rally tomorrow in (x) venue, it's important". Even though there was never a joint meeting, the six women through numerous small encounters and telephone calls before breakfast managed to

formulate a declaration, and mobilize indigenous women present at the NGO-Forum to endorse it.

Amanda and her colleagues were not just interested in the official part of drafting declarations, they also organized informal activities for indigenous women at the conference. Since UNCED in 1992, the United Nations' preparation of NGO forums automatically includes indigenous peoples as one of the relevant categories. Among the large tents, erected on a field at the site of the NGO-Forum as venues for regional or sectoral NGO representatives and activities, one was designated for indigenous women. Amanda co-ordinated the activities in that tent. There were daily meetings, women just dropped by, and information was exchanged about relevant panels among the thousands of activities. The tent was above all a locality for women to socialize, find contacts and exchange, often emotional, experiences linked to their indigenous identity. Most of the 150 women that regularly attended the ongoing 'caucus' as it was called, were not directly involved in the formulation of the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women, but the declaration was discussed and found its constituency in the tent.

From this discussion of international work we may conclude several things. Amanda's particular skills and background facilitate her activities in international arenas. This is realized through the two key skills developed during her international experience. She artfully masters and combines different discourses that prevail in different domains and she has the ability (together with her colleagues) to give *social* meaning to infrequent, culturally diversified, professional relations. As I show in the next section, these abilities also played an important role when dealing with funding agencies.

Power at the funding interface

At first sight, the relation between NGOs and their funding agencies appears one of inequality, where the NGO depends on funding for its survival and the power rests with the funding agency which can impose conditions for turning on the money tap. However, the relationship in practice may be quite different. The funding agencies also depend on the NGOs, and power relations at the interface of NGOs and funding agencies evolve in different ways. I elaborate on this in the next chapter. Here I anticipate the next chapter by looking into the question of how NGOs deal with their funding agencies. Since most funding comes from international sources, the relation with funding agencies is another instance of an interface over large distances with infrequent encounters. Analyzing such interfaces adds to the foregoing discussion for two reasons. Unlike international policy arenas, relations with funding agencies are usually bilateral, and successful NGO performance at the interface can be measured by a simple indicator, namely whether or not the NGO secures funding. That is why questions of power are easier to analyse in these relationships than in broader international arenas.

Some NGOs are much better positioned than others to acquire funding. CWNGO has always been fortunate in this respect (which does not mean that the organization lives on a large budget, since it has always remained relatively small). All relations with its four major funding agencies have been initiated by the funding agency, and not by the NGO. CWNGO was founded at a time when indigenous women were rising on the policy agendas of funding agencies, and when relatively few organizations were explicitly focusing on this target group. In addition, the fact that Amanda is visible in international meetings seems to play some role. It puts her in the picture and perhaps makes her appear trustworthy. Also, some funding agencies are notorious for incorporating the more 'famous grassroots' in their portfolio. At one conference, for example, Amanda was approached by the director of a funding agency who invited her to submit a proposal. When she replied that several proposals of CWNGO had already been turned down by his agency because they were considered too radical, he apparently said: "so, why don't you make another one and send it to me and then I shall see personally what I can do about it".

Getting acquainted with a funding agency is only one step. Subsequently, it requires a lot of effort to make the funding relationship work and last. The funding relation can be viewed as an arena of contestation where power struggles take place. The parties negotiate the terms of financing, reporting and accountability, in order to define the meaning of the NGO's performance and the terms of the relation. Is the NGO a client of the funding agency, or are they partners? Is there one- or two-way accountability? Is it possible to establish a relation that stretches beyond the contractual obligations in order to facilitate prolonged support? How can the NGO obtain recognition from the funding agency as a trustworthy organization? Here, I explore these questions by analyzing how CWNGO, and Amanda in particular, deals with one of the funding agencies.

Establishing a relation

The relationship with CWNGO's major 'funding partner' was established in 1987, when a representative of this agency visited the Cordillera in search of indigenous women with supportable programmes. In chapter three I narrated how CWNGO managed to get into touch with this person during her visit and give her a proposal. A lot of things had to happen before the proposal was approved. The Protestant European Funding Agency (PEFA) required church endorsements and CWNGO had to undergo official registration. Most importantly, the desk officer of the PEFA wanted them to change the proposal. He felt there was too much emphasis on research, and preferred to have a larger component for socio-economic work. When Amanda went to Europe in 1988 on a speaking tour, she made an appointment to go and see this person.

Naturally, funding agencies try to find out what they can about prospective partners. It appears that this also happens the other way around. NGOs, if possible, do not just learn from agency reports and leaflets what their policies and priorities are, they also gauge how to approach the agency's representative. NGO actors have their own perceptions of cultural differentiation, and express a preference for

working with agencies from one nationality over another according to the way they treat their NGO clients. Moreover, they experiment with and investigate how to relate to particular agency representatives: who among them, for example, is sensitive to flattery, or who prefers a more direct approach. Before going to Europe, Amanda went to visit a Philippine/English couple that lived in Baguio and were familiar with the PEFA representative she was going to meet. The couple wondered if she should aim to get funding through this person, because:

"They warned me he would want a say on how one managed the project. I think they were intimidated by him. They thought he was quite obnoxious. He says what he thinks and is not diplomatic at all. So they asked me if we really wanted to be funded by them. I said: 'Well, considering that we don't have any funds, why don't we explore it?'"

Amanda bore the information she had gathered about the representative in mind when dealing with him. During the visit, the PEFA representative again questioned the need for research written into the proposal. As Amanda remembers:

"Then I really got pissed off. So I said: 'Well, if you are not interested in it, maybe we can look for others who will be interested to really support the thing'. And then he backed off. Maybe he was expecting me to say, 'sure, if that is what you think'. That is what he would expect because usually Filipinas are like that [laughs] you know. I think that was one of the things which somehow... after that we became quite close. I just discovered that when you are very frank with him, when you really tell him what you think, it is okay, because he is also like that."

On the basis of what she had learnt about this agency and person, Amanda decided to 'play it hard' and this strategy paid off. Not only did she acquire the funding, she also negotiated the terms of the 'partnership' by refusing to treat the wishes of the funding agency representative as commands. In the process, the two managed to establish a relationship of mutual appreciation. And the relationship was pursued successfully. The funding agency still continued to provide the core finance of CWNGO at the time of writing this thesis. A relationship thus evolved in which CWNGO obtained finance for three-year programmes, on which regular reports were submitted, after which the new three-year programme had to be proposed and subjected for approval to the funding agency. What did CWNGO do to convince the funding agency that the reality at the basis of their reports was 'good enough' to continue funding?

Maintaining a relation

CWNGO stays in touch with the funding agency through reports and occasional visits. Amanda encourages the funding agency representative to always include CWNGO in his itinerary when visiting the Philippines. When she has a schedule in Europe she will also try to drop by his office. According to her, face-to-face contact is a key element to facilitate the negotiation process. As she explains:

"It somehow gives the funding person a chance to really try to get to know you. That's important in that kind of relationship. How do you really know the kind of people you are dealing with? Are these the people you can trust? Are these the people who will really implement what you are talking about? So, I think that is crucial in establishing a relationship with the funding agency. Otherwise, it is just communication, *you can write the best thing but they would never really know what you are.*"

Reports, at first sight, represent a different mode of communication with the funding agency. While visits are meant to enrol funding agencies' trust, reports are a mechanism of formal accountability where the NGO has to answer to the authority. However, a close reading of reports shows that they are also devices for negotiating mutual accountabilities and interweave formal and moral modes of accountability. CWNGO sends regular financial statements (which are not taken into account here) and annual or bi-annual narrative reports. The narrative reports are between 10 and 20 pages, and are organized in a similar format. Most of the pages consist of quantitative summaries of the NGO's activities, followed by a number of qualitative observations, lessons learnt, insights gained, and a brief outline of next year's direction. Before giving this information, the reports always start with several pages that describe national and regional processes and events. These pages contextualize CWNGO's work for the year.

The opening pages take the reader, as it were, to the area and give a sense of what has been going on in the last year. They convey some messages too. In the first place they show that CWNGO defines its work in the socio-political context of the region, and is sensitive to regional issues. In other words, the NGO makes it a point of principle not to follow always their programme as it was planned. They prioritize their obligations in relation to demands from the region over the implicit contract in the pre-planned programme. In the second place they serve as a disclaimer for possible shortcomings. The context is never really encouraging for NGO work, and the updates deal in particular with the militarization and human rights abuses in the area. Providing such introductory paragraphs reminds the funding agency that they are front-line workers operating in difficult conditions. There is an implicit challenge in the text, saying "if you are disappointed in the outcome, dare to criticize us from your safe, predictable desks". The opening paragraphs, then, are attempts to dictate a certain reading of the report. They are not merely responses to reporting requirements, but serve to enrol the reader and to negotiate the relation between the funding agency and the NGO.

At this point I must hasten to add that I am not arguing that NGOs and funding agencies are equal in a process where power evolves. The two parties are in unequal relation. Although NGOs have certain (moral and knowledge) advantages over the funding agencies, there remains a difference. Funding agencies can set out *strategies*, the NGO develops campaigning *tactics*. At the end of the day the NGO has to play it well and *hopes* to obtain funds, whereas the funding agency *decides* what to do. While NGOs can *ask* things from agencies, agencies can *demand* things from NGOs.

Amanda is well aware that no matter how sympathetic a funding agency representative is to an NGO, the agencies' interests will usually come first. Although she likes to be as frank as she can, she is careful not to say anything to place the representative in a double-bind, since "in the end, they also have their job to defend, so when they have to draw the line they will take the side of the funding agency". Notwithstanding the cordial relationships and personal appreciation NGOs may have for funding agency representatives, this cannot entirely compensate for a number of other sentiments they espouse. This ranges from contempt by the frontline worker for the bureaucrat, a post-colonial anti-imperialist anger for being at the mercy of Northern agencies, and a resentment towards strangers having a right to pry into internal matters. Dealing with funding agency requirements is very time-consuming and can create a lot of anxiety in the NGO, which after all depends on funding for its survival. This was very noticeable in CWNGO when a new term had to be negotiated at a time when many funding agencies were withdrawing support from politically radical NGOs in the Philippines. A nervous and mounting tension reigned in the office for several months and many staff members, afraid of losing their jobs, started to explore exit opportunities. By the time the proposal was approved, the management committee jokingly announced they had to go on sick leave because of FAT: Funding Agency Trauma.

The point I want to make is that acknowledging the existence of inequality does not mean we should overlook the strategizing agency of NGOs in shaping the relationship with funding agencies. NGOs can make a difference and can become relatively powerful in defining the situation, the role of the NGO, and the terms of the relation with the funding agency. Whether they manage to establish a relationship of trust depends on how well they play this game and how well they represent their organization.

Analysis: NGO leaders as brokers of meaning

What can we learn from the case of Amanda for a social analysis of NGO leaders? It appears that, in addition to particular personal skills and talents, two features stand out in successful NGO leadership. These are the ability to bridge different life worlds by mastering a large range of development discourses, and the ability to create social relations and communities. These are abilities, but the question is of what? Are these indeed the abilities of development leaders who successfully build the organization through their own value-driven, knowledge-based, and responsive leadership style, as John Hailey (1999: 3) stipulates? Or are they the abilities of leaders who successfully represent their organization at social development interfaces? To my mind, bridging life worlds and forging social relations are not primarily the abilities of leaders, but of brokers.

In attempting a social understanding of Philippine NGO leaders, Gerard Clarke analyses leadership in terms of patronage. For him, NGO leaders act as patrons to their staff members, who thus become clients through the development of

personalized ties (Clarke 1998: 199). At the same time he conceives of NGO leaders as clients of political patrons in society. NGO leaders, in his view, continuously risk being crushed by competing pressures from their staff and constituency on the one hand and from their political patrons on the other. In Clarke's view, NGO leaders have little room for manoeuvre in defining the meaning of their organizations. This does not match at all with the picture evoked by Amanda's story. Although patronage in the Philippines certainly plays a role, the concept falls short of explaining NGO leadership in development situations.

Another perspective on NGO leadership in the Philippines is offered by Aldaba, who shows that on the basis of their educational standing NGO managers are predominantly middle-class. He views NGOs as "vehicles for middle-class participation in social transformation" (Aldaba 1993: 51). Aldaba suggests that NGO leaders should maximize their in-between position. Instead of trying to coincide with a particular target group, they should recognize the distinct assets that emanate from a combination of their middle-class, educated positions and their experiences with the grassroots. Precisely because they are middle-class professionals, they are "able to network with other sectors that are also working for social change" (*ibid.*: 22). In the eyes of Aldaba, this makes them ideally suited to becoming mediators of development. This notion comes closer to Amanda's case, but is still not able to bring out how NGO leaders acquire and play out this position in practice.

Olivier de Sardan explicitly views NGO leaders as *brokers* (1995), or development intervenors that mediate between different knowledge systems, namely the language of development and local languages (Olivier de Sardan 1995: 155). In this view, development intervenors fulfil a function in bringing together two parties who need each other, but can only get together through the mediation of a broker. They fulfil their brokerage role in exchange for commissions. This perspective acknowledges that NGO leaders have an interest of their own in development, be it some personal project or a cause for which they stand, and recognizes them as strategizing actors. What I find problematic in Olivier de Sardan's approach, however, is that he assumes there is a need for brokerage preceding the appearance of the broker, that the broker fills a gap that already exists between two parties. This follows from his treatment of development languages as incommensurable. He assumes that development agencies and local people can never understand each other unless the development agent acts as go-between. As discussed in previous chapters, I do not think the assumption of incommensurate development discourses is at all pertinent or accurate, and should be replaced with an idea of development discourses as interpenetrating and negotiated.

I think we do more justice to the abilities of actors like Amanda, by bringing into the analysis another approach to brokers, namely that put forward by Cohen and Comaroff, who focus on the management of meaning as a form of political behaviour. According to these authors, the role of broker embodies the essential attribute of power: "the capacity to construct and purvey meanings concerning a variety of relationships and interactions" (Cohen and Comaroff 1976: 88). They conceptualize the broker as a political actor "who seeks to make the other parties to brokerage relations - patrons and clients - dependent upon his services" (*ibid.*). In this

analysis, a broker not merely responds to a need but negotiates relationships by convincing the other parties of the meaning of organizations, events and processes. Following these authors, I suggest we consider an important element of NGO leadership the ability to act as brokers of meaning. Successful leadership, to my mind, is contingent upon the capacity of NGO actors to enrol others in accepting their presentations of worthwhile values, target groups in need, their own role as disinterested, and the services of their organization as indispensable.

Notes

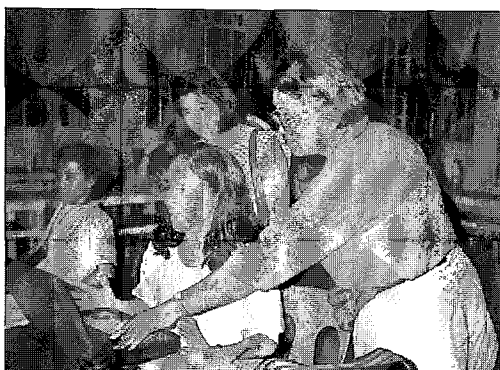
¹ This was in relation to the anti dam struggle, see chapter 2.

² Note that the question of the impact of NGO activities on international policy processes is beyond this discussion of Amanda's involvement as an NGO representative at the UN. For assessments of the influence of NGOs in international policies, see Wilmer 1993; Kakabadse and Burns, 1994; Willetts, 1996; Arts and Roozendaal, 1999.

³ The work done on indigenous women (see Tauli-Corpuz and Hilhorst, 1995) has attracted little attention in international indigenous work. A 1993 volume (Wilmer 1993), for example, reviewing indigenous movements in world politics makes no single reference to women or women's activities.

⁴ I found the international NGO community highly competitive. One of the ways in which NGO actors discredit each other is by claims that they do not represent the 'real' grassroots constituency. Where their roots are indigenous, one might hear the comment that they are not really indigenous, either by blood or by upbringing.

⁵ For this reason I avoid the concept of social capital.



9

Funding Agencies and NGOs: Peeping Behind Paper Realities

The relationship between Southern NGOs and their Northern funding agencies is much debated. Central questions here are how much influence funding agencies are entitled to have and how much influence they actually exercise in practice. The debate is complicated by the diversity among both funding agencies and NGOs. Funding agencies vary in their approaches, policies and styles of intervention, and therefore in the extent to which they can and want to impose on NGOs. Diversity among NGOs regarding their size, leadership, country, and fields of work further accounts for large differences in the room for manoeuvre of NGOs *vis-à-vis* their funding agencies. In view of this diversity, Farrington and Bebbington (1993: 188) dismiss the notion that donors are determinant of NGOs' activities and modes of operation. Instead they maintain that NGOs "manoeuvre within this diversity" in order to pursue their own strategies by selectively choosing those funding agencies whose interests coincide with their own and by their ability to repackaging their programmes according to donors' desires.

Most authors, however, are inclined to ascribe more power to the funding agencies than to NGOs. Hulme and Edwards conceive of the donor-NGO relation in terms of bargaining and negotiation, although at times marked by coercion (1997: 11). In their view, NGOs have varying room for manoeuvre, which defies gross generalizations about donor power. Nevertheless, the authors conclude that there is a process of convergence towards donors among southern NGOs that results in increasing upward accountability at the expense of the relationship of the NGOs to their constituencies among the poor (*ibid.*: 280). Thus, "while NGOs remain diverse, there is clear evidence that this diversity is being reduced by donor policies" (*ibid.*: 9;

see also Smillie 1995). In like manner, it has also been argued that diversity among funding agencies is declining. In the post-Cold War era fewer funding agencies are inclined to finance politically radical projects (Biekart 1996) and, notwithstanding variations, they have moved towards an agenda based on neo-liberal economics and liberal democratic theory (see chapter 6).

Donors are considered powerful because their influence stretches well beyond the obvious gateway to finance they can provide or withhold. Accepting a funding relationship entails entering into agreements about what is to be done, and how it is to be reported and accounted for. Trends in donor preferences influence agendas for development. This has been the case, for example, with the focus on gender and environment at the expense of class-targeted interventions (Dietz 1997), or on micro-credit aimed at promoting self-employment rather than protecting the public provision of basic needs (Edwards and Hulme 1996: 9). Donor policies also impact on everyday practices. As was discussed in chapter 6, modes of accountability elicit particular accounts and invite a certain ordering of activities. Since modes of accountability display specific rationales, accepting these requirements enhances certain ways of perceiving and assessing organizations. In other words, practices of funding may have profound implications for how NGO actors give meaning to their organization and its fields of intervention. While strong critique is often voiced against the direct interference of donors in NGO policies (see for instance Perera 1997), the more damning objection *vis-à-vis* donor influence may be that it frames the very terms of what constitutes NGOs, society, development and social change.¹

However, it is not an easy task to gauge the magnitude and pervasiveness of donor influence on NGO programmes and practices, since this differs by country and case (INTRAC 1998: 82-5). Furthermore, as argued in previous chapters, we should not take at face value their adoption of certain notions since these may later be renegotiated in everyday practice. And while agreeing with the above-mentioned trend towards convergence, one can also note certain trends towards divergence, and who can tell how prominent these may become? Yet what indubitably stands out is that funding agencies are important actors in development. But where are the studies necessary for unravelling the actions of these actors? So much focus has been put on research into NGOs (admittedly including this one) that funding agencies seem to escape ethnographic scrutiny altogether. My problem statement regarding NGOs, namely that we cannot take for granted what these organizations are, do and want, it seems, is equally pertinent for funding agencies. If not, the representation of these agencies as neo-liberal democratic organizations working towards rational, accountable and transparent development will continue to stand as erect as the Statue of Liberty herself. What is needed then is an exercise for funding agencies, similar to the one attempted in this thesis for NGOs, namely, the lifting of the veils on their representations, revealing the dynamics underneath, and looking at the practices of donor actors with a view to defining the meaning of their organizations and modes of legitimacy.

In this chapter, I wish to make a start with this kind of analysis by elaborating one case of a donor-NGO relationship. It concerns the relation between CWNGO and a organization belonging to the United Nations, which I shall simply call the 'United

Nations Agency' (UNA). It will be followed by an account of how this relationship, after a promising start, turned sour up to the point at which the UNA terminated its funding because, as the director of the funding agency claimed, the NGO was neither efficient nor accountable to its constituency. The case study, however, shows the vastly more complex, multi-layered history underlying this outcome, due to the dynamics of political differences, organizational competition, and differential interpretations of 'partnership'. The chapter ends with some notes on a socio-political understanding of donor organizations.

The SPRINC programme

In the early 1990s, an UNA development expert, Mr Izmit, conceived of a programme for indigenous women. This became the SPRINC programme: the Self Help Programme for Indigenous and Tribal Communities.² SPRINC started in 1993, and has projects in a number of developing countries, including several projects in the Philippines. One of the first programmes in the Philippines was conducted by CWNGO. Like most international development programmes, SPRINC involves a number of development actors. It is financed by donors, in particular from Denmark and the Netherlands, who are involved in the programme, through regular meetings with project representatives. The Geneva-based SPRINC staff, consisting of Mr Izmit and an assistant, is concerned with funding, produces training material, carries out monitoring and evaluation, and provides general guidelines and advice. At the country level, the programme is managed by a co-ordinator concerned with monitoring and training. The partners of the programme consist of "indigenous and tribal peoples at the grassroots level" (the People's Organizations or POs in Philippine jargon). They identify projects, are involved in the selection of local NGOs and the project staff, and have to undertake a yearly self-evaluation. Local NGOs are responsible for project design and implementation, hiring of personnel and staff training.

In what follows I outline the history of CWNGO's involvement with SPRINC. More precisely, I will explore different narratives about this involvement from the viewpoint of CWNGO and SPRINC respectively. The narratives are based on interviews, correspondence, project reports, and observations of my own. After a brief chronology of the history of the programme, I zoom in on issues of contention regarding politics, implementation, and partnership.

Funding agent seeks indigenous woman, or was it the other way around?

The question of how the relationship between SPRINC and CWNGO started takes us straight into diverging narratives. Mr Izmit and Amanda, the director of CWNGO, met at a meeting in 1993 organized by the UNA in Manila. As Amanda remembers, Mr Izmit expressed that he was happy to meet her in person since he had seen some of her writings. He invited her to submit a proposal. CWNGO then submitted a

proposal for research and training, which was approved. It was a project of five months. When it was finished, Amanda consulted Mr Izmit about a possible continuation. He then suggested to her to incorporate their project into the new SPRINC programme that was about to enter its pilot phase. According to Amanda's story, Mr Izmit went as far as to write the proposal for them. As she recalled several years later:

"We didn't have time to write something down, so we just talked with him, and he wrote the proposal for us. That was really fun. It was the first time in my life a funding agency wrote a proposal for us. The next time we met he showed it and Minda made some revisions. When he saw these he approved it there and then. In principle of course, it still had to go through the procedures."

According to CWNGO staff, Mr Izmit was so interested in incorporating them into SPRINC that he sat down and drafted the proposal for them. When I asked Mr Izmit about this in 1997, he asserted that he had never said any such thing. He remembers the story differently:

"I met Amanda in 1993, when I was on a mission in the Philippines. *She asked me* if we could help to set up training and co-operatives. We then decided together for a baseline study, or rather some case studies. The first phase was more or less okay, but the quality was not very good. I don't remember the contents, but I remember that I was not 100% satisfied. However, as I really liked Amanda and the people she worked with, and since they are a local NGO, I decided to continue with a pilot."

By the time I heard this version, the relationship had already turned sour and ended, and we cannot judge how his critical memory about the first days was influenced by subsequent events. What I find interesting, however, is Mr Izmit's insistence that CWNGO requested his support and his firm denial that he had a hand in writing the second proposal. Unlike Amanda's presentation of his role, his own narrative clearly fits into SPRINC's discourse of participation that stipulates that the programme responds to requests of locally formulated programmes. The suggestion of an alternative reading of how the programme started clearly disturbed him.

The different projects

Whatever really happened at the start of the relation, the fact is that CWNGO started with a five month's project for research and training, with the primary purpose of collecting baseline data. The budget was US\$ 5,000 for project activities. There was no provision for salaries: staff involvement was the counterpart contribution of CWNGO. While Mr Izmit recalls that he was not very enthusiastic about CWNGO's performance, CWNGO staff members especially remember the bureaucratic delays incurred in the implementation. Eight months and a lot of bureaucratic hassle elapsed between the moment of approval and the final go-ahead-signal for this small, short-term project. According to CWNGO's reports, the implementation consisted of 14 education-cum-data collection seminars with local women's organizations. These

were orientations for women, pre-membership education seminars for co-operatives, and project and co-operative management training.

The second proposal was submitted in March 1994. This proposal was couched within the frame of the new SPRINC programme and a larger proportion of its activities had to be devoted to credit for co-operatives, at least one for each of the five provinces. There was also provision for staff salaries: two plus a part-time project co-ordinator. The total amount involved was US\$ 28,500. The project was immediately approved to run from May 1994 to April 1995. The staff involved in SPRINC were two CWNGO organizers from the socio-economic desk in the Baguio office and a member of the management team, Minda, as co-ordinator. The proposal envisaged co-operative projects for some six women's organizations. In the course of the year, however, it was realized that this number was set too high, and upon consultation with the UNA representatives, it was reduced to three.

The first organization to avail itself of a revolving credit fund was a village women's organization in Luaya in the Province of Kalinga (see chapter 5). This local organization had a long-standing relation with CWNGO and had managed a credit fund before. Initial activities for the SPRINC programme consisted of meetings and training. In May 1995, the local women's organization requested a release of money in order to set up a rice fund. There had been a severe drought and the harvest was further destroyed by an excessive number of mice in the fields. The women wanted to buy rice in bulk to sell in the village. The implementation of the fund went very smoothly, and within a year they were ready to pay back the loan in order that another women's organization could make use of the fund. The other two organizations involved in the project were both urban poor women's organizations in Baguio City. They wanted to do weaving and needlework projects. The first one started its revolving fund in September 1995, the second in December 1995. As a result of these late starting dates, the project lasted until mid 1996, instead of finishing in May 1995. During this period, the relation between the agencies increasingly deteriorated. Nonetheless, CWNGO submitted a third proposal for a renewed phase under SPRINC. However, in April 1996, Mr Izmit wrote a letter announcing that SPRINC would no longer finance this new phase of the project. This set in motion the end of the relationship between CWNGO and SPRINC.

With this brief history in mind, let me now elaborate on the qualitative aspects of the relation between the two agencies. I start with a meeting that took place in Baguio City in November 1994 when the SPRINC Philippines office had just begun operating. The meeting in Baguio was organized by Mr Buduyan, usually referred to as Alfredo, the Manila-based coordinator of SPRINC. The meeting had a double purpose. It was an occasion for Alfredo to introduce himself and to discuss some of the protocols and procedures of the project with CWNGO staff. In addition, a visiting consultant from UNA-Geneva wanted to have a meeting with indigenous peoples' representatives to discuss a possible UNA-sponsored programme that she was preparing. Let me call her Maria.

I discuss this meeting for two reasons. First, I want to analyse the general flow of the meeting and the conversation that took place, so as to provide a window on everyday relations between funding agencies and NGOs. Words like partnership,

participation and learning are easily used in development, and bear the promise of a certain equality among participants. These notions can be put to the test by focusing on the outcomes of capital events such as decisions about funding or deliberations about the content of programmes. On the other hand, they are also lived out in ordinary events and find expression in the way people treat each other during interaction. In everyday encounters power relations are forged and inequalities reproduced. Even though the following is only a sample of one such encounter, it hints at the importance of this kind of analysis for understanding donor-NGO relations. Secondly, I wish to use the meeting as an entry point for discussing the political controversy that continuously lingered in the project relation. This concerned the different attitudes of the 'partners' regarding government policies on indigenous land.

UNA comes to Baguio to meet the people of the Cordillera

That Saturday morning we assemble at 9 o'clock in one of the NGO offices in Baguio in order to attend the meeting with the UNA people. Minda, the project co-ordinator has summoned the four staff members of CWNGO's project desk to attend. Moreover, one of the Board members of CWNGO, -who is at the same time officer of another NGO working on indigenous issues in the Cordillera-, is asked to sit in. I am there at my own request, with permission to observe and tape the meeting.

When, at 9.15, none of the UNA guests have arrived, the CWNGO people start to worry that there might be some miscommunication regarding the venue of the meeting. So one of the staff members is sent to the CWNGO office to see if there is any message, while Minda checks at one of the inns where she thinks they might have stayed overnight. They both return with negative news, so we simply wait. At almost 10 o'clock, three people arrive: Alfredo, Maria, and an officer of a government organization. The latter is involved because Maria has requested to consult both with government and non-government actors.

Once all of us are seated around the table in the office, everybody briefly introduces him or herself and, at the suggestion of Alfredo, expresses their expectations of the meeting. The latter are invariably the same: "*to learn more about the SPRINC programme*". The introductions on the part of the CWNGO people are brief and hardly audible. I wonder if the appearance of Maria makes them shy. She looks impressive: very ladylike (beautifully kept hair, expensive blouse matching the colour of her eyes, and an elegant pair of slacks) and has an unmistakable air of confidence. She takes more time to introduce herself and her intended programme in the Philippines. While in the transcript of the meeting all participants only have an introduction of 2 lines, hers extends to 66. She formulates her expectation of the meeting as: "*I came here to learn from CWNGO*".

After the introduction, Minda starts to talk in order to set the agenda. When she suggests taking up two hours for sharing ideas, she is interrupted by the government

employee, Delma, who announces that she has made other appointments for Maria at some government agencies, the first scheduled for 11 o'clock. This means that suddenly there are only 45 minutes left for the remainder of the meeting with Maria. The SPRINC matters will be left for discussion after her departure. After these deliberations are finished, Maria begins to speak. As can be seen from the statistics shown in Table below, she talks most of the meeting: some 65%.³ If we add to this the contribution of Alfredo, then it turns out that the UNA representatives fill up 80% of the speaking time. Although a quantitative analysis of speech does not say much in itself, it certainly gives an indication of the social relations of the meeting.

Speaking turns of participants at UNA - NGO meeting in Baguio.

	Organization	Number of speaking turns	Number of lines in transcript	% of lines in transcript
Maria	UNA Geneva	16	543	65
Alfredo	UNA Manila	11	121	15
Delma	Local government	2	4	0
Minda	CWNGO	5	85	10
Yola	CWNGO	12	73	9
5 others	CWNGO	5 (1 each: intro)	10	1

After the introductions are made, Maria starts to explain the purpose of her visit. As she says, she came to the Philippines to promote her idea that UNA can facilitate the implementation of a new government programme on ancestral lands, called DAO-2. Under the programme indigenous peoples can register their claims to ancestral land. She talks for a long time, corresponding to 355 lines in the transcript of uninterrupted speech. Rather than wanting to *learn* from CWNGO, it seems that she wants to *convince* the CWNGO representatives of the opportunities involved in DAO-2. Moreover, she claims she already knows CWNGO's position on the matter. Even before the participants are given the chance to comment, she states as part of her speech that:

"I know that, especially in the Cordillera, DAO-2 is not very successful or, I mean, has encountered significant resistance. I have read about it, and I shared this with Alfredo when we met in Rome. There are certainly a number of weaknesses and gaps. Gaps that are very important. However, I think it is not only a step further of ensuring or enhancing the situation, but the whole concept is very interesting."

She then proceeds to explain possible advantages of regulations like DAO-2, that provide schemes for the management of ancestral lands. While doing so, she uses

examples from six different countries that she has visited in person. It is hard to miss the message that, although an Italian national addressing a meeting of indigenous people, she is in fact the expert on indigenous affairs, especially since none of the local participants have had a chance to talk up to that moment. The 'lecture' on schemes for managing ancestral lands is concluded by Maria by saying that she believes that NGOs and POs "should work with the government and see how to bring it in". She ends:

"Well, I know that in the Philippines, and not only in the Philippines, there is a resistance from NGOs to collaborators... as soon as you do so, you are looked at and perceived by others as being co-opted by the government, that you have sold yourself to the government. This has been an attitude of several intellectuals I have noticed. And I remember once, I had a discussion with a very good Venezuelan anthropologist. And I said, now the government is more open and willing to get NGOs in to get this sort of advice, why don't you join? And she said: 'No, because I don't want to get my hands dirty, because if things don't work out, I would get the blame in the future'. That is too easy..."

Through this statement, she not only dismisses those opposing the government as 'intellectuals' (with the implication that they are distant from the experiences of real indigenous peoples), but blames them for choosing an easy way out of a challenge. At this point, for the first time, Yola intervenes. She says:

"It is different here. If you join a government project, sometimes, they just take you in because it is a condition. So, your suggestions and recommendations are not apt..."

But before she can finish her sentence, Maria interrupts her:

"That is why I was thinking if you could have an international organization which was more neutral and which in this case would really work... I mean there are enough human resources and expertise in the country to be used, there is no need for... [interrupts herself] My idea is that the UNA would play a role of bringing in different people and coordinating the work."

A discussion then evolves in which the CWNGO representatives can finally explain some of their reservations regarding DAO-2. While the meeting goes on, I notice that, apart from Minda and Yola, the CWNGO staff members gradually detach themselves. One staff member starts to leaf through a book, another busies herself drawing. She will later tell me she has not understood anything of Maria's fast English. The other will tell that she was overwhelmed with the information. Minda and Yola pay attention and sometimes intervene, but I can tell from their faces that they are annoyed. This is also apparent when both of them stand up to pour themselves a cup of coffee without bothering to offer the visitor anything to drink, which is unusually rude. Towards the end of the meeting, Maria inquires from the CWNGO representatives what in their opinion should be the priority in the Cordillera. Yola then briefly explains something about research and the resolution of

boundary conflicts. Without responding to Yola's considerations, Maria has to leave for her next appointment. Before leaving, she says she wants to hear more from CWNGO and will therefore return for lunch. However, she is apparently overtaken by subsequent events because she does not return to the meeting and we hear no more from her. Years later I will find out that Maria has indeed set up some projects in the Philippines, but not in the Cordillera. She never communicated this to the region.

Considering the discussion in which the CWNGO staff obviously not agreed with Maria and displayed several hints of irritation, including a 'James Scott' act of resistance around the coffee, I expect them to be quite sharp about the meeting. However, to my surprise they hardly say a word about it. When I ask Minda what she feels about the meeting, she just shrugs her shoulders and says: "Well, what can you expect?". She is apparently not very shocked by the way the meeting evolved or about Maria's attitude. I wonder if, perhaps, she would have been more surprised if a consultant had actually given them space to formulate their experiences and opinions without imposing his/her own ideas. It seems that the staff consider the meeting a non-event: just one of those things you have to put up with as part of the funding relationship. On the other hand, the issue discussed (DAO-2) is going to be increasingly significant for the way in which the relationship evolves. The visit of Maria forebodes a mounting discomfort of the NGOs with SPRINC's position regarding this matter. Let me explain why.

The pitfalls of land politics

DAO-2, the programme that Maria so enthusiastically promoted, was strongly opposed by the NGOs in the Cordillera. The objections raised were many. At the most principled level, the indigenous movement to which the NGOs belonged denied the government's right to acknowledge claims to the land, which was the land of indigenous peoples and thus ought to be outside government jurisdiction. There were also numerous legal and practical objections. There was no single clause or guarantee that the claims registered under DAO-2 would be granted. It was thus felt that the government dangled a carrot in front of the indigenous communities without actually promising any results. Problematic in itself, the objections against DAO-2 were seriously compounded by the suspicion that the whole programme was no more than a ploy to facilitate the acceptance of other government policies aimed at exploiting the region's resources in a way that ran exactly counter to the idea of self determination (see also chapter 3). One programme was a new dam to be constructed in San Roque, which was going to be far larger than the dams planned for the Chico river in the 1970s and which were successfully thwarted by the indigenous movement (see chapter 2). Another programme concerned the new mining law. This law granted (international) mining companies permission to exploit up to 100,000 hectares of land with the purpose of opening pit mines. With this permission, companies acquired rights to open mines in the area, to use all the timber and water necessary for the exploitation, and even to dislocate people whenever

necessary. The opposition against this policy was overwhelming and united groups of many different political colours.

According to the indigenous movement, the ancestral land programmes were at best hypocritical but probably downright deceitful. According to them, the delineation of ancestral land made land measurement and registration possible, which otherwise had not been acceptable to the local communities. It was strongly feared that all land data gathered under 'delineation of ancestral domain claims' would be used to facilitate entry of foreign mining companies that would eventually destroy the ancestral land. Once it was clear that SPRINC indeed worked within the framework of DAO-2, this posed a serious problem to CWNGO. Increasingly, actors in the Cordillera NGO Consortium considered UNA's contribution 'dirty money', meaning money that should not be accepted as a matter of principle. When CWNGO learnt that Mr Izmit was preparing a new programme in the Cordillera, in collaboration with local government, it considered ending its relationship with the UNA. CWNGO management was angry that SPRINC by-passed the NGO supposed to be its partner in setting up this new programme, with an anticipated budget fifteen times larger than the combined budgets for the two CWNGO projects. More importantly, they felt it would compromise them politically. As Minda said:

"We entered this relationship to maximize our resources. As long as we forward our needs, and their demands are still acceptable, that's it. Now, with the new project, that is very controversial and so we are not keen to pursue it. I like to see this as a benchmark year. If Izmit will really push for the [DAO-2 related] CADCI, then we cannot relate to them any more. We can readily let go of UNA. It would not be acceptable to us any more, because that is exactly opposite to what we are promoting."

A few weeks after she said this, the letter arrived from Mr Izmit saying that he was not going to continue supporting CWNGO. In the same letter he invited Minda to act as a consultant in the new programme. She then wrote back turning down his offer and severing ties with SPRINC. Different views on ancestral land politics contributed to the breakdown of the relation. This was the case both for CWNGO and, as we shall see below, for UNA. First, let me turn to problems concerning the implementation of the programme.

Problems in the implementation

In the course of the project, SPRINC grew increasingly critical and impatient with CWNGO's performance. The major problem was that, in the eyes of Mr Izmit and Alfredo, the pace of implementation was too slow. The project officially lasted for one year, until April 1995. However, the first revolving fund was only established in May 1995, i.e. after the termination of the project term, followed by funds for the other two organizations in September and December of that year. Indeed, this was a slow pace even for the NGOs. The project coincided with a period of thorough internal evaluations in the NGO network, including a reconsideration of the nature

of socio-economic projects (see chapter 3). As a result, new projects could not easily be started up. Nonetheless, CWNGO felt that the critique was not justified.

CWNGO partly bounced back by criticising SPRINC for also being slow because it did not release the money until February 1995. More importantly, Minda felt there was a large gap between the two organizations' conceptions of the project. She stressed that the UNA representatives did not understand the need for social preparation and the importance of context for project implementation. As she explained one day to a new SPRINC staff member (a Dutch development worker) who came to Baguio:

"We cannot just release the money. We need to do social preparation. In our experience it takes several years, and this group we work with only started one year ago. It is difficult to create togetherness. We wanted the organization to mature. There was so much pressure to release [funds], so we released [them], but we continue our close supervision, so that it will not create divisiveness. We want to give them skills and projects but at the same time work for a strong organization. That is always the criticism of Alfredo: 'Why don't you release the money?'. I don't know if he appreciates the organizing we do. We were there before, we were there during, and we will be there after! And we will be blamed if the money creates problems, because we give it to them, that is why we are very cautious."

This comment especially referred to the two urban poor women's projects. These projects concerned newly formed groups in migrant communities with little organizational history or social cohesion. CWNGO found it therefore important to set up the organization properly so that they would be 'ready' to handle a project that involved money.

Who are the experts on indigenous peoples?

The problems between CWNGO and SPRINC were also related to different values regarding co-operatives and indigenous knowledge. CWNGO appreciated initiatives that helped women socio-economically, but not necessarily through income-generating projects. This could apply to projects aimed at forging social security through, for example, emergency credit or, as in the case of Luaya, a rice loan fund, or projects to enhance women's subsistence or room for manoeuvre, for example through a day-care centre. In addition, it wanted projects that contained elements for strengthening women's organizations. Minda felt that SPRINC had a strong preference for the kind of projects that involved cash, further monetizing indigenous communities, and resembling individual enterprises. As she said:

"So, the problem is really their [SPRINC's] economic approach, no, their cash-oriented approach. [...] And then, they have an individual bias. They don't want a project to strengthen organization, only at the family level. In the end, it is the business that they look at. So, they are happier with

the weavers than with the rice fund, because the weavers are more like a business."

Minda felt that CWNGO's arguments about indigenous women's cooperatives fell on deaf ears in SPRINC, and that generally speaking SPRINC did not take seriously their indigenous knowledge. Instead, SPRINC relied on expatriate academics, much to the anger of CWNGO, who considered this the academic bias of SPRINC. As part of SPRINC activities, for example, they were at one point invited for training on indigenous co-operatives. As Minda and the other CWNGO participants perceived the workshop, there was little room for exchange between the indigenous project holders. Instead, the workshop was facilitated by expatriate who were 'experts' on indigenous peoples. As Minda commented:

"They brought in these experts on Indigenous Peoples [IPs]. So, then we have this workshop with experts on IPs talking to *us* about who and what IPs are, on what their culture is and what their values are."

This example brings me to the next objection of CWNGO to SPRINC, namely that the programme entailed a lot of bureaucracy and imposed activities. Compared to the first phase of CWNGO's relation with UNA, when it was not yet under the heading of SPRINC, reporting requirements became much more frequent and stringent. On average, every two months CWNGO submitted a detailed report following formats designed by Geneva. In addition, there were regular workshops, training activities and meetings that CWNGO staff had to attend, whether they thought it relevant or not. It annoyed the staff that most of these activities were held at very short notice, "as if they think that we are always available", and were not based on a needs analysis. They often taught them things they already knew. Off the record, a SPRINC staff member acknowledged that not all training was appropriate to the programme, but served other strategic purposes, as was, for example, the case with training provided by a Dutch bank that sponsored SPRINC. As the SPRINC staff member said:

"Well, that is a concession to the donor. They have given money and they also want to score with this project, as with all of them. You have to allow them space to show off with the project, which they also consider their project."

While this training made sense for the continuation of SPRINC, for the participants it just meant another week away from work.

All in all, CWNGO increasingly perceived of SPRINC as a bureaucratic, Geneva-centred, cash-oriented and academically biased programme. The staff felt they were not taken seriously in their experiential indigenous knowledge, and in particular that SPRINC imposed a bureaucratic style and economic values that ran contrary to what they defined as 'indigenous style'. SPRINC, on the other hand, blamed CWNGO for 'withholding projects from indigenous women' and for being 'inefficient and slow' in their implementation. The criticism came to a head when CWNGO requested a rice mill for Luaya. By the time the mill was purchased, the community had withdrawn the application (more precisely, it had already obtained one through a different

channel). For some time, the rice mill just stood in CWNGO's office, until CWNGO requested to divert it to another community, in the province of Abra. When the SPRINC management realized the rice mill was not yet in the community, it demanded its immediate return. They did not want to divert the rice mill to a village outside of the proposed project area. When CWNGO then went through the proper procedure and submitted a proposal requesting a programme for the Abra community, it was turned down in the above-mentioned letter of Mr Izmit.

The meaning of partnership

Perhaps the core problem between SPRINC and CWNGO consisted of their different perceptions of the meaning of partnership. SPRINC considered its principal partners indigenous and tribal peoples at the grassroots level. Ideally, according to UNA documentation, these People's Organizations identify projects and then select or even set up an NGO to be responsible for implementation. In practice, how NGOs and POs relate, and how SPRINC related to the NGOs, turned out to be much more complicated.

SPRINC, NGOs, and the POs

In the case of the Cordillera, SPRINC entered a relationship with CWNGO, which selected the women's organizations for the programme. The perception of the set-up of the programme diverged from the start. According to the UNA, SPRINC stood on its own, and was implemented by village-based staff members over a fixed period of time. For CWNGO, SPRINC was one element in long-term, multiple relations with local women's organizations. It could have little pace of its own, since it was embedded in other activities and co-ordinated with other actors (i.e. the local groups and other NGOs in the network). For CWNGO, SPRINC represented one chapter in an ongoing history. For the UNA, it formed a history on its own. Illustrative in this respect are the progress reports of SPRINC. Without giving information on the context in which the programme operated, they report on activities as if they had started from 'zero'. The NGO staff, for example, are reported as having been 'recruited and trained', even though these people had already been employed by CWNGO for several years. The Kalinga women's organization is reported as having been 'formed with an initial membership of 58', notwithstanding the years of history of this organization prior to SPRINC (UNA 1995: 26-7). Through these reports, a myth is sustained of a programme without a history, operating in an institutional void, a point I will come back to later.

Although the starting point differed from the ideal situation represented by SPRINC, Mr Izmit wanted CWNGO to comply with his format. He wanted project staff to be based in the villages and to work full-time on the programme. CWNGO refused to do this. They thought the idea not feasible, and felt a staff member in the village would be 'overkill' of supervision and monitoring for small projects.

CWNGO followed the dynamics of an ongoing organising process, adapted to the pace of agricultural cycles, meaning that during planting and harvesting time no activities would be organized. In practice, this resulted in a prolonged implementation. The staff did not work full-time as stipulated in the contract, but on the other hand they continued with the programme long after it was officially finished. This issue became one of the breaking points between CWNGO and SPRINC. When the third phase proposal of CWNGO again did not incorporate village-based staff, Mr Izmit "got fed up". As he said: "That was it. They want to keep the money for their staff, they don't care".

During the life of the programme, SPRINC shifted away from NGOs and wanted to work directly with People's Organizations instead. From the way Mr Izmit and Alfredo talked, it appeared they increasingly considered NGO actors to be self-interested political agitators. During a consultation in Manila with the project holders, for example, a UNA consultant asked *Manang* Lorena from Luaya if her organization had considered working with CADCI, a regulation under the above-mentioned DAO-2 for the registration of ancestral domains. *Manang* Lorena replied in Ilokano: "*Haan mi nga kayat, tapno nu sumrek ti CADCI, agbalin nga pubic land ti dagayo*". Alfredo translated her comment: "She says that they don't like CADCI, because when you enter CADCI, your land will change into public land", and added as a comment of his own: "That is probably what they told her". *Manang* Lorena does not speak English but she understands it very well. She thus understood Alfredo's comment, and instantly replied: "*Saan! Nabayag nga ammomi dayta, adu ti kapadasen mi: No! We have known that for a long time. We have many experiences*". Nonetheless, Mr Izmit maintained the idea that opposition to DAO-2 came from the NGOs, and not from the people. When I interviewed him in 1997, he gave me his view:

"I know that some progressive NGOs have a problem with DAO-2. But our partners [meaning the local POs] tell me that 'it is only because they fear that they will have no work when our problems are solved'. The NGOs oppose DAO-2 so they can still maintain a role. Our partner organizations complain that the NGOs get all this money, but they don't see what they do with it. 'They just collect the money, but do nothing for us'."

In addition, Mr Izmit also felt that the NGOs were simply redundant but continued to create a role for themselves in order to protect their jobs:

"They are paid for their services, so they serve. If you withdraw your assistance, they withdraw their service, even when they say that they are with the people. POs, as they call them in the Philippines, are real local organizations and accountable to their members. They are there and they will not leave when the project ends. What is built up, what is capacitated will remain in the community. This is not just our idea, this is proposed again and again by the communities."

It is interesting to see how Mr Izmit dealt with DAO-2. He translated the political opposition against DAO-2 into a case of NGOs wanting to keep their jobs (ignoring

altogether that the opposition against DAO-2 was not spearheaded by the NGOs, but by the Cordillera People's Alliance representing some hundred People's Organizations). This he then translated into a lack of accountability on the part of NGOs. Political differences thus got repackaged in the technical development language of accountability. As a result, SPRINC changed its policies regarding NGOs. Whereas in the first phase NGOs were considered implementing partners, this shifted to direct support for People's Organizations that could hire NGOs as consultants.

The CWNGO people had a different story to tell. They did not respect SPRINC's allegations about their supposed lack of accountability, because they considered UNA much less accountable to the village women. CWNGO interpreted the whole issue in a different way, namely that SPRINC itself wanted to take over the facilitating role. In 1995, the SPRINC office in Manila was reinforced with two expatriate development experts. According to Minda:

"SPRINC works with NGOs in other countries, but here in the Philippines they don't like to. They have this office in Manila with these foreigners working with them, and they also want to do things. We just completed a training session for the weavers when the Dutch volunteer *insisted* that she give another one, and our staff should just be there. And of course it was a mess, the women didn't understand anything of her English, it took an age to translate, and they just did not understand what she was doing, it was much too complicated."

In the eyes of CWNGO, SPRINC simply used the argument of accountability to appropriate more of the implementation of the programme and expand its office in Manila. The issue over accountability and what the people wanted was discussed over the heads of the People's Organizations. As in the case discussed in chapter 6, 'the people' were brought up by both organizations as anonymous supporters. Mr Izmit's claim that "the communities themselves proposed this" is difficult to sustain. His encounters with villagers were sporadic and hardly spontaneous. On the other hand, CWNGO also partly orchestrated local women's statements, if only because oral reports during consultations had to be written up in English and were therefore drafted with the help of project staff.

Of partnership and loyalties

There is one more element relevant to understanding the breakdown between SPRINC and CWNGO. And that is the way CWNGO began to criticize SPRINC publicly. That was not part of the partnership that SPRINC had in mind. The first time that CWNGO publicly criticized SPRINC was in a meeting in Thailand in December 1994. It was a four-day 'Technical Review' meeting with project holders and representatives of the donors. CWNGO had two participants: Minda and Violet, both from the management team. From the stories recounted when they returned, it appeared that they had not liked the set-up of the meeting. Indigenous project holders had been given only 10 to 30 minutes to present their cases and the rest of the

time had been filled with long speeches from the UNA and an American University fellow lecturing on indigenous knowledge. They also told of an incident during their presentation, when Minda included a remark about the Geneva-centredness of the SPRINC programme. This had upset the SPRINC representatives, and Alfredo had immediately asked them to "clarify their statement". As she later understood, the meeting was meant to convince the donor representatives of the value of the programme. Instead of playing along with this, they had criticized SPRINC. Minda recalled the experience as follows:

"You know, I think I really hit a raw nerve, because the donors had been invited to get them to fund the second phase of the programme. And they already had their reservations with the UNA for being top-down, so when I said that, it hit them right where they were weakest. But, of course, they never told us that was the purpose of the meeting. They only told us that it was a technical meeting to discuss the programmes and that part of the programme was on how they organized it, so we gave our assessment."

The meeting also gave project holders the opportunity to get to know the donor representatives. The CWNGO participants had particularly liked one of the representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with whom they stayed in touch after the workshop. Six months later, CWNGO received Mr Izmit's letter rejecting their proposal for continuation. Although CWNGO had already been doubtful about continuing with SPRINC, the management was angry about this unilateral decision. That the proposal was turned down without discussing it or stipulating what had to be changed, and even without consulting the Manila-based co-ordinator, exposed, to their minds, the "true nature of SPRINC's sense of 'partnership'". CWNGO started to make some noise about it. They talked to Alfredo in Manila, who also felt by-passed, and they wrote letters of complaint to Geneva. Then they informed their 'friend' in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who they had met in Thailand. This person approached Mr Izmit to ask for clarification and to urge him to continue working with CWNGO. His appeal was effective, as Izmit later acknowledged: "CWNGO has friends, this man from the Ministry was very critical of us". As a result, Mr Izmit had lunch with Amanda, the Executive Director of CWNGO, when she was in Geneva for the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples to work out a compromise. But the attempt to renew the relation did not last for more than a few days. During the same Working Group meeting, a representative of the Cordillera People's Alliance criticized UNA for imposing its programmes on the communities. Although the statement came from CPA, Izmit blamed it on CWNGO. When the remark was later quoted in an international newsletter covering the Working Group meeting, Mr Izmit felt angry that CWNGO had breached the partnership. As he said:

"It was an internal problem. But then they started to criticize the agency. I tried to keep it internal, but they took it to the international forum."

Mr Izmit immediately brought the issue to the attention of Alfredo in Manila, who arranged for a letter to be produced by one of the People's Organization involved with SPRINC. This letter was sent to the donors and to the editor of the newsletter. It denied the accusation, and bounced the ball back by asserting: "CWNGO is not a PO, who are they to criticize the programme?" Once more, in the history of the programme, a PO was brought on stage to back up a development organization. This final conflict meant the definite ending of relations between CWNGO and SPRINC, or did it?

Epilogue on SPRINC

When I visited Mr Izmit in Geneva in December 1997, he told me that the project with the Baguio weavers had continued without CWNGO and now worked satisfactorily. The institutional counterpart of SPRINC was now INNABUYOG, the regional indigenous women's organization. Mr Izmit was very pleased to have a staff member responsible for the project who herself belonged to the People's Organization. When he mentioned her name, I realized I knew this woman. She used to be a staff member of an NGO for the urban poor belonging to the same Consortium as CWNGO.

Two months later I met Minda in a restaurant at Schiphol Airport, the Netherlands, where she stayed some hours in transit on her way to a conference. Asked about the latest developments, she told me that indeed the new SPRINC staff, used to be with the urban poor NGO. This NGO had been dissolved in order to work directly as part of a People's Organization. Although they had taken on this new identity, they still belonged to the Consortium and continued to work with the same political orientation. Even Minda herself continued to be involved, albeit in a different capacity, namely as officer of INNABUYOG. With some satisfaction she declared "You see, UNA cannot get rid of me". Whether this should be labelled a 'victory' is doubtful, but it brings out the irony of the situation. From the distance of Geneva the problem was neatly solved: the role of the NGO was eliminated and the project became owned by the PO. Seen from nearer by, the situation was more diffuse: the distinction between NGO and PO virtually disappeared, and continuity prevailed in terms of staff and thus partial 'ownership' of the project by the political movement of CPA and the NGO Consortium that Mr Izmit so much disliked.

Mutual representations of SPRINC and CWNGO

SPRINC representations of CWNGO

"CWNGO asked us to help them"

"SPRINC aims to strengthen the capacities of indigenous and tribal peoples; helping them to design and implement their own development plans and initiatives, and to ensure that their traditional values and culture are safeguarded"

"CWNGO is too slow in implementing the projects"

"One of the tasks of the SPRINC - Cooperative Branch level (in Geneva) is to produce and disseminate training materials"

"CWNGO should not have criticized SPRINC in public. As partners we should solve problems internally"

CWNGO representations of SPRINC

"UNA wanted a project with us. The UNA representative from Geneva even drafted the project proposal for us"

"SPRINC is cash-oriented. What they like is projects that look like businesses, not the projects that help subsistence, although that is also economic. And they have an individual bias, they don't like projects that strengthen the organization"

"UNA does not communicate the schedules. Appointments are always made and changed at the last minute"

"They don't see us as experts on indigenous affairs. They rely on expatriate academics to tell us about indigenoussness"

"UNA should not have cancelled the project unilaterally, after all we are supposed to be partners"

Discussion

In the introduction to this chapter I called for an ethnographic analysis of funding agencies. The first question is whether the UNA was in fact a funding agency. There is no easy answer to this. In the first phase of the relationship, during the initial five-month project, UNA clearly acted as a funding agency. The confusion starts after this period, with SPRINC. SPRINC is a programme financed by external donors and is not directly implemented by UNA but through the relations it enters into with implementing agencies. In the eyes of CWNGO, UNA therefore continues to be the funding agency. In the Philippines, the situation becomes even more complicated when the Manila office expands and uses the services of two expatriate development experts to assist the programme co-ordinator. At that point, the Philippine SPRINC section becomes more and more of an implementing agency itself. The identity of the agency acquires additional layers when we take into account the actors. For example, the national co-ordinator, Alfredo, had decades of experience as a government bureaucrat before he joined SPRINC. His ideas have always echoed government positions. This contributed to the fact that SPRINC began to drift away from the NGOs in order to work more through local government structures (as they did in the Cordillera after severing ties with CWNGO).

The case of SPRINC may appear exceptional, but I would argue that multiple realities are part of every funding agency. Many take on several roles or identities: they may be fund raisers in their own society and depend on government financing. They may take the role of implementing agency and organize conferences or give training. They may be membership organizations of churches or social movements, branches of political parties or private firms, and compete with other funding agencies. Some even present themselves in international conferences as representatives of their Southern NGO partners. When this is the case, my notion of organizations as fluid entities applies equally well to funding agencies as to NGOs. This has the important implication that we should not mistake the policy statements about development and funding for the 'real thing'. Such statements are official presentations, drafted to suit particular audiences. The everyday practices of funding organizations are steered more by the multiple realities beneath this surface, just as in NGOs, where their actors balance different domains of work.

The account given above reveals the many layers and narratives of the relation between SPRINC and CWNGO. The agencies have a very different understanding of themselves, each other and what has happened during the programme's history. What is interesting is that the differences are often expressed in the same language. As can be seen in the illustration below, many of the criticisms and claims are mirrored: both agencies consider the other ineffective, unaccountable and breachers of their partnership. What is at stake is not so much the terms of the debate but the meanings attached to these terms. This underscores the arguments put forward in chapter 1 on the negotiation of seemingly dominant development discourses. As several authors have demonstrated, the meaning of particular concepts is reshaped

through use. Likewise, CWNGO and SPRINC seem to agree about the importance of things like indigenous knowledge and participation. However, in the process the meaning of these concepts is negotiated on the basis of deeply-seated differences, for instance about the relative importance of expert knowledge and local knowledge concerning 'indigenouness'.

One of the contested concepts is 'partnership' (INTRAC 1998: 90). Funding agencies have increasingly come to adopt the term partnership to denote their relationship with the NGOs that they support. As Stirrat and Henkel say: "for the donors, the great advantage of the model of partnership is legitimation in that it allows them to claim a certain authenticity: 'we are of and for the people'" (Stirrat and Henkel 1997: 75). But what does partnership mean? Because of the asymmetry between givers and receivers, Stirrat and Henkel point out that partnership should not be understood as legal partnerships, but more as the partnership of marriage, involving complementary and different identities. As they put it: "as with most marriages, the relationship is as much a site of struggle as a cause of harmony" (*ibid.*: 76). The nature of partnership and the roles and discretion of the partners involved are always under negotiation, and the way in which the partnership evolves reflects the power processes taking place.

Bickering over effectiveness, accountability and partnership deals with more than semantics. It is about politics, in two ways. Firstly, it is about politics in an ideological sense, as in the controversy around SPRINC's and CWNGO's positions regarding ancestral land delineation. Both organizations are reluctant to bring this argument out into the open. SPRINC translates the political opposition to DAO-2 in terms of a self-interested lack of accountability. CWNGO articulates the political undercurrents with audiences in the region, but speaks in international meetings in terms of how the UNA imposes its programme on the community thereby emphasising a lack of participation. James Ferguson (1990) likens development to an anti-politics machine. On the surface, this indeed seems to be the case with the history of SPRINC. However, as this chapter makes clear, even though ideological politics disappear from public transcripts, they continue to play a definite role in the minds and actions of the respective stakeholders.

Secondly, it is about politics in a more narrow, organizational sense. Funding agencies can escape questions of legitimacy no more than can NGOs. They have to legitimate themselves in the eyes of their own donors, governments, constituencies and finally the public at large (often mediated through the media). As mentioned above, the use of the term partnership can be viewed as a device for legitimation. This notion brings Quarles van Ufford (1993: 141) to label project reports and representations of the local scene as political statements. This author shows how development agencies carefully balance knowledge and ignorance in order to enhance their legitimation. He discusses an Indonesian project where: "everyone involved in the project knew that these notions [about the community] were false, but there was no alternative to upholding the official development ideology" (*ibid.*: 137). Reports of SPRINC stating that an organization had been formed, knowing that it had been operating for years prior to the project, can be understood as such a political statement aimed at legitimation.

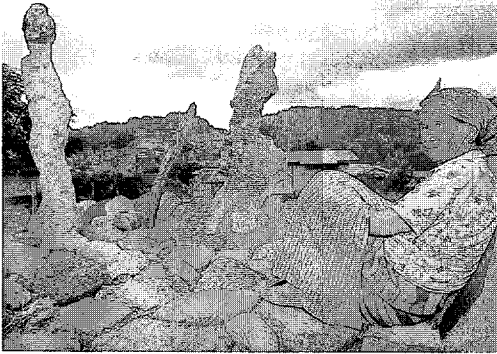
The argument of accountability turned out to be a particularly strong weapon in this quest for legitimation. Mr Izmit and Alfredo could justify their Manila office's expanding role in the implementation of SPRINC by casting doubt on the accountability of CWNGO. CWNGO likewise defended the need for its prolonged involvement in the programme by accusing SPRINC of being top-down and Geneva-centred instead of being accountable to indigenous people. The role of the People's Organizations in the discussion remained marginal: both agencies mobilized certain PO voices in their representations. Accountability to the local people seems an effective argument: it is morally high ground and difficult to falsify. When it is used, as in the cases presented in this thesis, to settle conflicts between different intervening agencies it becomes political. As a result, "you are not accountable to your constituency" is very likely to mean "my notions of development are better than yours and I want to expand my influence or take over your clients". As shown in chapters 3 and 4, the adoption of dominant discourses is not without danger. However, as this case makes clear, making use of the (depoliticized) dominant development discourse can also be a weapon in the hands of funding agencies who want to impose their agenda. It can also be a weapon in the hands of NGOs, who want to resist this imposition and work towards their own agenda.

Notes

¹ For the case of the women's movement in the Philippines, this notion was elegantly elaborated by Colette St-Hilaire (1992).

² As with the Philippine organizations, I have used pseudonyms for the international organizations and programmes. My ethnography aims to reveal processes, which are only partially particular to the organizations under study. I used pseudonyms to avoid singling out these organizations with a critical analysis.

³ This means that 65% of the lines of the transcripts were hers. Actually her contribution was even greater, since the change of tape that occurred while she spoke, is not taken into account.



10

Conclusion: NGO Everyday Politics

This study started from a certain frustration. Non-government development organizations had become a major phenomenon since the 1980s. Their small size, links to the grassroots, sympathetic values, and capacities for efficient service delivery were marked advantages above state development institutions. In the early 1990s, the glorious image of NGOs became dented. Discussion erupted about their proclaimed effectiveness, alleged close connections to the grassroots and possible lack of accountability. Although I found these issues relevant, the discussions, both critical and celebratory, seldom moved away from generalized notions. They often spoke of NGOs as if they were a single phenomenon. It was assumed that one could know what an NGO is, by knowing its leaders and reading its mission statements and reports. I did not believe this to be the case, and anyway there was little information available about the internal dynamics of these organizations. With this study, then, I wanted to look inside an NGO at the working of policies, practices and accountability. To realize this, I was able to do fieldwork with one development NGO in the Cordillera of the Philippines: the Cordillera Women NGO, or CWNGO, and its surrounding networks.

My research interest can be summarised as follows. I want to know why certain sets of actors form organizations that they call NGOs, and how they ascribe and negotiate meanings for such an organization. Processes of meaning making are central to everyday practice, since they underlie the numerous small and big, proactive and responsive decisions and actions that together make up the organization. In addition, I have a focus on matters of everyday politics. On the one hand, this entails the way ideology was important in shaping the organization. On the other, it involves the question of how NGOs acquire legitimation as a development organization *vis-à-vis* relevant other parties, including clients, donors and

constituency. This means that I had to look into processes by which NGO actors convince stakeholders that a situation requires development, that NGO intervention is indispensable and appropriate, and that the NGO is capable and has no self-interest in the envisaged programme. Before recapturing some of the more salient findings from the preceding chapters, let me reiterate the three pillars of my approach.

An actor orientation

Throughout this study I use an actor orientation. Such orientation starts with the premise that social actors have agency. They reflect upon their experiences and what happens around them and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to development. For clarification, I must stress that an actor orientation is not individualistic. It does not focus on single individuals but acknowledges that agency emerges from social processes. Social actors are constructed, among others, through their life worlds, experience and social networks. Also, an actor orientation is not voluntaristic. It does not assume that people are free-choice agents, but recognizes the large range of constraints that impinge on social actors. However, while recognizing these, actor orientation emphasizes that such constraints operate through people. They only become effective through the mediation of interpreting actors. A central concept in an actor-oriented approach is room for manoeuvre. This refers to the social space actors have or lack for enabling their ideas and projects. How actors 'expand' their room for manoeuvre depends on their effectiveness in enrolling others in their projects, which is called effective agency. Finding out how NGOs work in a particular environment then boils down to following their actors to see how they find room for manoeuvre to realize their projects. That is what I did. For three years, I followed NGO actors in their different domains of work, studying how NGO practices come about and acquire meaning, through formal manifestations and actions as well as more informal everyday operations. To do this, I often use a social interface analysis. Interface analysis focuses on the linkages and networks that develop between individuals or parties at points where different, and often conflicting life-worlds or social fields intersect (Long 1999: 1). Interface analysis can reveal important dynamics, concerning the interplay of multiple discourses and the way in which power relations get shaped.

Processes and things, labels and representations

One important issue of this research is how people (not just anthropologists) grapple with the relation between processes and things. In their everyday practices people have a practical awareness of the process nature of organizations and other phenomena. Yet, they simultaneously adhere to thing notions about the same. One focus of the study is how actors accommodate these different notions in finding meaning, how they use them strategically in processes of legitimating, and how they respond when other people use thing notions about their organization. The latter refers to how NGO actors manage or not to negotiate the labels given to their

organization by others, which box them into particular ideological corners (such as those of feminism or communism) or turn them into utilitarian objects (such as project providers). My definition of NGOs reflects this interest in the relation between processes and things. By most definitions, development NGOs are intermediary organizations that bring about development for poor and marginalized people. They distinguish NGOs from non-NGOs and fake-NGOs, with the result that they do not analyse how such distinctions are constructed and used in practice. I took a different position. Acknowledging the process nature of organization, I refused to define the organizations as such. The way in which NGOs are formed in practice and how actors accord meaning to their unfolding forms, principles and procedures are matters for empirical investigation. Instead I define the *name* of NGO as a label claiming the organization does good for the development of poor and marginalized others. The question then becomes why actors take on this identity and how they find recognition as the 'do-good' organizations implied in the label.

Another class of things of particular interest is representations. Through their accounts and practices NGO actors convey images about what their organization is, does and wants. By definition, representations are a simplification of the 'real thing'. Unlike the multiple realities and nitty-gritty of everyday practices, representations provide a single understanding and closure. They are narratives that are organized around a specific rationale, for example, based on the causality between inputs and outputs, or on a reduction of reality to politically-opposed interests. The point is that representations are not just a neater and simpler version of reality, but may be completely unrelated to reality. I concur with John Law (1994: 26) who argued that we should abandon a correspondence theory of representation. Instead of asking ourselves whether a representation corresponds to reality, we should be concerned with the workability and legitimacy of a representation. Through this study, then, I want to see how actors compose different representations, and to explore the contests involved in their efforts to enrol others in accepting them.

Duality of discourse

Given my interest in issues of meanings and legitimation, discourse is important. In the introduction to this book I introduced this concept to denote an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 2). Discourses are more or less coherent sets of references for understanding and acting upon the world around us. As was pointed out by Foucault, discourses intertwine knowledge and power. However, how discourse works, how it exactly intertwines knowledge and power is a matter for debate. Positions in this debate run along an axis ranging from extremely structuralist to highly voluntaristic. The latter position may be found in uses of discourse as merely any kind of conversation, or in views of the world as a marketplace of ideas that actors strategically employ to their liking. The extreme on the structuralist side is found in views of discourse as 'regimes' that constitute us to the extent that we make them true by allowing them to play upon ourselves. I define my position somewhere in between, by speaking of the 'duality of discourse',

following Giddens' notion of the 'duality of structure'. Recent literature rejects the notion of a hegemonic development discourse. There are always multiple discourses and actors find room for manoeuvre to renegotiate them. Discourses do not provide ready-made scripts to act upon but are reshuffled, circumvented and enacted by social actors. Hence, they are actors' constructions. However, the other side of the duality of discourse stipulates that discourses are not innocent and can indeed become powerful. The more dominant a discourse, the more it operates as a set of rules about what can and cannot be said and done and about what. As a consequence, actors through their discursive practice may turn these discourses increasingly into reality. Many chapters of this thesis have looked into the issue of the duality of discourse by asking, on the one hand, how actors strategically use discourse, and on the other, when and how particular discourses become powerful and what that means for NGO practice.

Findings

I shall not summarize all questions posed and conclusions drawn in the separate chapters. Instead, I will present some general findings that come forward from different chapters and have a particular relevance for development NGOs.

On the question of why NGOs are formed

Why do people form NGOs? The NGOs that have been introduced in this thesis were formed as functional devices. CWNGO emerged from a political movement and was formed by activists who found that adopting the label and format of an NGO facilitated the acquisition of funding and moreover provided them with a 'neutral' entity to operate in politically volatile situations. Another NGO, the Kayatuan Ladies Association that was discussed in chapter 4, was formed to attract projects. It is important to note that, in both cases, becoming an NGO was an identity *added* on to ongoing organising processes. CWNGO continued to be a hardly distinguishable part of the larger whole of the National Democratic political movement it belonged to, and the KLAi was entangled in social networks and organizations in and beyond the village. This supports the idea that one cannot perceive of NGOs as entities, but that we have to take into account the notion of multiple realities. Rather than organizations with fixed boundaries, NGOs appear as composed of overlapping social networks. The fact that these NGOs were formed for particular reasons, and as part of ongoing organising processes, points out that taking on the identity of NGO is a political act. Adopting this claim-bearing label is a strategy in NGO everyday politics aiming to acquire legitimation as an organization that does good for the development of others.

On the issue of how staff deals with the multiple realities in NGOs

Once NGOs are formed, they acquire realities of their own, moving away from their founding rationale and often becoming more important for the actors involved than originally intended. NGOs appear as an amalgam of different discourses, relations and ambitions. This multiplicity is partly related to political opportunities, changing state-society relations, and development discourses. The history of CWNGO was partially shaped by opposition to dictatorship and the struggle against the dams in the Chico river, followed by particular opportunities and constraints resulting from the restoration of democracy in 1986. Likewise, its programme was partially formed through responding to government policies for the region. CWNGO further emerged as it did because it could take advantage of the preferences in the international development 'community' for indigenous women, and because part of its organizational values, commitments and modes of operation are derived from development and participatory discourses prevailing in these communities.

The multiplicity of NGOs also stems from a particular feature that is intrinsic to CWNGO and many other of such organizations. They operate in a number of different domains, each with their own (though partly overlapping) languages, rules, routines, and demands. This results in a great many 'forces' that pull and push NGO actors in different directions, create incompatible commitments, and result in confusions and contradictions. These discontinuities and segmentations are exacerbated by differences among staff members in the NGO with regard to their politics, origin, kinship, sexuality and livelihoods. These result in different loyalties, responsibilities and values, and make for different styles of intervention and different understandings of what the NGO should be. To accommodate and negotiate differentiating patterns and pulls requires the ability to process experiences and reflect upon oneself and one's environment. It is by reshuffling and combining these different 'pulls and pushes', in other words by improvising, that NGO actors attribute meaning to the organization and arrive at a certain coherence in their everyday practices.

Management and staff members attach meaning to the NGO by reflecting on the question of what the organization and its environment signify. Because all actors are actively engaged in these ongoing reflections, organizations are de-centred: their meanings are not just derived from the wilful manipulation of managers, nor can we distinguish neat competing voices of 'management versus the rest'. Meanings are informed by many elements. They draw on official policies and office procedures, as well as a range of discourses from within and outside the organization. As a result, staff members attach different values to the diverse meanings the NGO may have, such as a giver of services, a family, an ideological bastion, a source of livelihood, a space for women, a cultural statement of 'unity in diversity', a project bureaucracy, and an indigenous institution. Processes of ordering in these multiple realities evolve through everyday practices, for instance around the symbolic use of locales in the office, through a variety of overlapping social networks and by evoking particular cultural institutions. However, although there are always ordering processes, resulting in patterns, routines and a certain predictability, there is never order.

Actors continue to have different understandings of and continue to negotiate organizational properties.

On the room for manoeuvre acquired by working in different domains

In order to survive, NGOs need to find legitimation as 'intermediary organizations doing good for the development of others'. This quest for legitimation is complicated because NGOs operate in different domains, where different values and relationships prevail. NGOs deal with different stakeholders. They have to convince their clients that they have something worthwhile to offer, while enrolling them in the (political) projects of the NGO. They have to convince their constituency, such as the social movement or a church community, that they maintain their loyalty to them, while doing their development work. They have to convince funding agencies that they are worth putting money into, and persuade their counterparts in international arenas that they are knowledgeable and can represent the ideas of their local clients.

This aspect is important for understanding NGO everyday politics. As stipulated above, it adds to segmentations and contradictions in NGO practice. However, because NGO actors deal with multiple domains that are relatively separated from one another they also find room for manoeuvre in strategically operating the diverse relationships. In chapters 4 and 8, I elaborated how certain actors that I call 'interface experts', be they village women or international NGO personalities, can become powerful because they master languages prevailing in different domains, and can use this strategic knowledge to advance their interests at different interfaces. In chapters 5 and 6, I explored how NGO strategies and practices that are seemingly directed to one domain of operation are actually meant to influence another field of action. For example, the policy model of Cordillera NGOs that was officially meant to steer organizing in the villages, mainly worked as a strategic device in inter-agency conflicts. I want to stress that NGOs, because they link a variety of domains that at most partially overlap, have a knowledge advantage over their stakeholders that can enhance their power. Because actors in different domains only have fragmented knowledge about each other they rely on NGO representations to know what happens in the other domains. As I return to shortly, this characteristic complicates accountability processes.

On the question of how NGOs relate to their stakeholders

At first sight, the relation between NGOs and their stakeholders appears to be contractual. Stakeholders act as authorities, for whom NGOs fulfil certain explicit or implicit obligations. The findings in this thesis highlight how, in practice, relationships between stakeholders and NGO actors are negotiated and evolve into a myriad of ties. The nature of the authority-relation, for example, is not as clear-cut as follows from the idea of NGOs as mere service institutions. Chapter 9 shows how, despite the fundamental inequality between funding agencies and NGOs, the latter can sometimes, if not turn the table, at least develop a substantial countervailing

power, allowing them to secure stable funding, and negotiate the terms of accountability.

Furthermore, we have seen how relations tend to thicken into multiple ties binding stakeholders and NGOs. Relations with stakeholders turn out to be multiplex. Villagers, for example, endeavour to bind NGO actors through maximizing their social ties and they put pressure on NGO actors to make them morally accountable to them. Chapter 8 revealed how NGO leaders forge social communities within international arenas to delineate partnership (whom to work with and whom to oppose) and fruitful working relations. They also strategically enrol representatives of funding agencies through linking with them in social and moral ways. As a result, seemingly contractual relations come to take on different intertwining layers, where contractual obligations are entangled with moral obligations, emotional rewards (prompted by gratitude, flattery, observed improvements and other encouraging feedback), friendly favours, and ideological statements.

On the question of when and how discourse becomes dominant

The notion of duality of discourse has helped me to understand a variety of processes taking place in NGOs. It highlighted how actors strategically deploy a multiplicity of development languages, such as when relating to development interveners (chapter 4), and funding agencies (chapter 9). But it also allowed me to bring out how discourses are one of the structuring elements of development. At most times, I found NGOs articulating a number of multiple 'official' discourses that find their way in policies, analyses, speeches and practices, as well as 'everyday' discourses based, among other things on, kinship and cultural institutions. Each of these discourses in itself has a certain coherence and provides particular scripts for action. When NGO actors give meaning to their organization they draw, in part, on these discourses. However, at certain points in time, as I stated in chapter 1, discourses indeed succeed in effecting a certain 'closure' of alternative readings of situations and relations. More than fashions, these discourses are effective in recreating the past, stipulating policy for the present, reshaping organizational forms and practices, including, excluding and recomposing people's relations. One of the questions I have addressed in this thesis is when and how particular development discourses become dominant in closing options and creating new realities.

I found two different kinds of processes through which discourses may turn dominant. The first is when wider political processes pose such threats that actors resort to a single discourse. This has for example been observed with discourses on nationalism and gender, where women in crisis situations find certain roles and identities foreclosed to them (Byrne 1996; see also Wilson and Frederiksen 1995). In this thesis, two such instances were discussed. In chapter 2, when under the threat of inundation of their ancestral lands, a discourse on 'land is life' quickly gained prominence among alternative notions about land. And in chapter 3, I followed how a particular ideological discourse gained central importance in a social movement and NGO Consortium. This discourse became powerful at a particular historical

junction through a combination of convincing, coercing and seducing actors. Note that in these cases the specific discourse became dominant within a short time span. Perhaps not consciously decided on, but at least in these situations actors were aware of the changes taking place. They were debated on and participants were "intensely committed to the outcome of these debates" (Smith 1989, p. 26).

However, there is also another way in which discourse can become dominant. This takes place over longer periods of time, and happens in a far less visible way. In these cases, powerful discourses are emergent properties. They do not result from immediate crisis situations, but are reproduced through the unintended consequences of everyday routine practices, without the actors being aware of it. For example, this is the case in chapter 4, where the numerous actions of village women contributed to the centralization of a modernist discourse at the expense of the status of peasant women. I found this also in chapter 3, where, in the course of time, a development discourse gained ground and slowly changed values attached to the formal educational requirements for staff members. As a result, the activist founders of NGOs increasingly found themselves displaced, partly of their own making, by college degree holders. The irony of the duality of discourse, as this case brings out, is that actors adopt certain discursive strategies to enhance particular interests, but may find themselves eventually caught up in this discourse, leading to undesired consequences beyond their control.

Even though discourses can become dominant (in different ways), this study concurs with the point that they are never hegemonic. Even the rectification discourse that seemed to become hegemonic in channelling the way in which actors experienced development, was, as I discussed in chapter 3, mediated by actors' agency and acquired multiple meanings as a result of the differential responses to it by the actors involved. Moreover, there are always multiple discourses. Even in the situation where the rectification discourse was for some time the only acknowledged official discourse, it was contested by informal discourses engrained in everyday practices, in particular those concerning gender and sexuality.

On how local people endow adopted institutions with their own meanings

One of the reasons why several authors talk about hegemonic discourses in development is that they assume that when actors use particular phrases derived from a dominant discourse, they also adopt its meaning. This idea has been discredited in several recent publications, for overlooking the fact that the meaning of development notions is renegotiated in the local context. So, even when a certain vocabulary is adopted it may acquire different and often multiple meanings in the localities. The same goes for institutions. Various chapters of this thesis show that we cannot assume the meaning of organizations and organizational practices by their appearance as modern organizations. In chapters 4 and 5, I discussed local village organizations that adopted modern, formal modes of organising but endowed these with different symbolic meanings. One organization had taken on board a full complement of officers in order to divert conflict and competition among women professionals. In another case, villagers politely embraced this form of organization,

with a set of separate committees with clear responsibilities and tasks, and held their meetings in highly formal ways as homage to the NGOs. It was a token of respect and a strategy to confirm the ties and obligations between NGO staff members and themselves. In view of this, we should be cautious not to stop our enquiry once familiar institutions are identified, since they may turn out to have entirely different symbolic meanings.

On the question of how representations become workable and legitimate

Since NGOs operate in a variety of social domains, a large aspect of their work consists of providing representations of processes occurring in the other domains. When talking to a representative of a funding agency, an NGO manager will talk about the state of local development, how state policies operate at local level, and the alternative projects of social movements. Likewise, NGO staff members present particular readings of the country's political economy and state-society relations to local villagers. In this thesis I paid ample attention to how such accounts or representations are formed and how they become workable and legitimate.

Legitimation centres around making certain representations more acceptable than others. Representations of development NGOs, therefore, have everything to do with power. Competing understandings often lead to conflicts. Chapter 2 showed how three parties developed and defended particular discourses on a movement for regional autonomy, which was in fact a vicious conflict over leadership of the movement and 'ownership' of its history. In chapter 6, I described another conflict over local development, involving two NGOs that had to account for their interventions in an NGO Consortium. In many cases, however, accounts become workable through processes of enrolment. This happens relatively unnoticed and without (open) conflict. In these cases the account giver has mustered enough effective agency to enrol others into accepting his or her understanding and adopting his or her projects. As I found in this thesis, enrolment efforts work through addressing the different layers of relationships as outlined above, and by combining various modes of operation. Illustrative of this point is the nature of reports CWNGO sent to its funding agency. As discussed in chapter 8, these reports were more than mechanisms of formal accountability. They were also devices for negotiating mutual accountabilities and attempts to enrol the funding agency through interweaving the formal records with moral claims.

I wish to emphasize the role of local people in the everyday politics of legitimation of development interveners. Participation of local NGO stakeholders in policy discussions and accountability processes is often facilitated and considered important. In practice, I found the influence of local people in these processes negligible. Instead, time and time again I found local people, evoked through their orchestrated presence or merely by quoting them anonymously, depicted as supporters to claims by outsiders competing over access and power in development and seeking their own legitimation. This was the case for NGOs as well as for funding agencies. As I concluded in chapter 9, principled discussions over accountability to local clients of development are likely to hide competition over

outsiders' notions of development and influence over these local people. What happens in the domain of local development is drawn into other domains, where it acquires a different meaning as weapon in conflicts or competition.

Since representations are constructions, they reveal the agency of the account giver. A 'good representation' (i.e. one that works and legitimates) as I stipulated, is an artful improvisation that combines fragments of actual experiences and discourses with bits of knowledge about the party for whose sake it is delivered or enacted. For this reason, I have stressed that NGO leaders are *brokers of meaning*. Rather than filling predefined gaps for intermediation, they negotiate relationships by convincing the other parties of the meaning of events, processes, needs and their own roles. At the same time, however, we have to realize that the social construction and working of representations are not one-way processes. Interfaces with stakeholders are better viewed as arenas, and representations as emerging from negotiated processes influenced by both parties at the interface. The two-way nature of constructing representations is, firstly, apparent from the ways in which NGO actors are influenced by experiences with and ideas from their stakeholders in constructing their representations. This point is illustrated by the history of the movement for regional autonomy where experiences with local villagers brought activists to change their own projection of the situation (see chapter 2). Secondly, NGO actors have to negotiate their identity in relation to the notions and expectations that stakeholders have about them. In many cases, as we have seen, NGOs lose this battle for their identity.

In chapter 5 several case-studies made clear how local villagers, by fostering a certain image of the NGO and responding accordingly, reshaped considerably the NGO and its interventions. In one case, the NGO was not able to overcome the kinship-based tactics employed by the villagers, in another they were confronted with reluctance as soon as they stepped out of the role of an alternative government accorded to them by the villagers. Likewise, in other domains NGOs had to deal with political labels attached to them (such as in the case of CECAP in chapter 3) as well as with general claims regarding NGOs by international agencies, government representatives, or the media. Making representations work is a process reflecting *and* effecting power relations in development.

On the need for further research

This study has followed an NGO in its different domains of work. Some issues that I encountered, made me regret not having more time to expand this research journey. In the first place, my research pointed to the need to look at the meanings that policies and organizational models acquire in practice. Policies are important, if only because the concept of un-planned intervention is unthinkable (Dusseldorp, 1990). In chapter 5, I asked why NGOs hold on to an organizing model, even though they knew that it did not work as claimed. The model was important for regulating inter-agency relations, it provided a language in which to express reports and had a symbolic meaning in underpinning the revolutionary ideals of the NGO's leaders. As a result, what was presented as a device for planned intervention, worked out

differently in practice. Actors were aware of (some of) these and partly used them strategically. Hence, I think it is important to take into account in ethnographies the 'social life of policies'. Furthermore, I have become weary by how little attention is given to some of the stakeholders of NGOs, in particular the funding agencies. In chapter 9, I made a start with the socio-political analysis of one funding agency in relation to a local NGO. As it turned out, claims on the part of the funding agency about the lack of efficiency and accountability of the NGO, hid a vast complexity of organizational competition, political differences and different interpretations of 'partnership'. Actors in the offices of governmental and inter-governmental headquarters and those of the donor agencies must be made subject to ethnographic scrutiny, in order to avoid that their self-portrayals remain unchallenged.

Everyday politics

In this final section, I would like to reiterate some implications of this study for issues of NGO everyday politics, both for legitimation and ideological politics.

Politics of legitimation: issues of accountability

The accountability of development NGOs is considered a problematic issue. My analysis corroborates this. NGOs are accountable to different stakeholders. The substance of their accountability is mainly directed to their local development work. It forms the backbone of NGO legitimation in other domains. As the case studies have demonstrated, the room for manoeuvre of NGOs for steering development in villages or poor urban areas varies, but should not be over-estimated. Development processes are constituted by many things, including historically produced associational patterns, the ensemble of development interventions and local resources, and wider processes of inclusion, exclusion and marginalization. In the interface between staff members and villagers, I found villagers in all cases appropriating development interventions by redefining meanings and redistributing benefits. This resulted in a variegated picture of unpredictable processes with a large diversity of outcomes.

Indeed it is clear that accounts of these local processes are necessarily partial, simplifying, and but one interpretation among many possible narratives. It is therefore important to take on the study of how particular narratives are constructed and gain legitimation in accountability relations. In chapter 6 I followed an accountability process and discussed some pertinent literature. I found accountability processes more reflective of negotiation and power struggles in the context of the everyday politics of legitimation, of competing development interveners as well as between donors and NGOs, than of what happened in the actual development process. I concluded that this turns transparency into a myth: instead of revealing what really happens in the localities, accounts are permeated by what happens in the accountability process.

In the face of increasing criticism of NGO accountability, several alternatives have been proposed for improving practice. Several authors have suggested that NGOs should clarify and redefine their core values in order to have a more stringent frame of reference for accountability processes (Fowler 1997; Edwards 1999). Others have sought to devise alternative tools for more comprehensive and more participatory accountability (Zadek and Gatward 1996). Although these new approaches perhaps represent a major change in accountability practices, they should not be considered a panacea for the accountability problem and are as liable as more traditional forms of accountability to be used as weapons in the everyday politics of legitimation. There does not seem to be a single solution or methodology to realize accountability. We shall always need to critically improvise, combine methods and make the best of them.

For those that demand accountability, in particular donors, I think it is helpful to acknowledge different modes of accountability instead of relying solely on formal accountability. Perhaps, when international organizations and donor agencies begin to realize and acknowledge the social nature of accountability, they might invest more in trust and less in disciplining through detailed accountability demands. What I mean here is not that they should trust development NGOs, but rather that they should invest in becoming trustworthy partners with development NGOs, thereby forging the moral commitment of NGOs to live up to their promises.

Notwithstanding my reservations, I am not pessimistic about accountability. The everyday politics of legitimation that tend to corrupt accountability also contain the necessary pressures to move towards more meaningful accountability. NGOs are vulnerable to losing their good name, by which their legitimation stands or falls. The easiest way to protect one's good name is by living up to one's proclaimed standards. This is the case for individual NGOs but also for the entire sector. Development NGOs have become aware that the reputation of their sector is increasingly at stake with policy makers and the public at large (the latter through critical reporting by the media). As a result, NGOs risk losing the respect that they so easily commanded in the 1980s and 1990s. This provides additional grounds for critical reflection within NGOs. Considering the nature of NGOs as intermediary organizations, they have to show stakeholders that they are doing a reasonably good job with their clients. If they don't succeed, they risk losing their appeal for funding agencies, their legitimacy as advocates, their credibility in the eyes of media people, and eventually their status as organizations that are seen to do good for the benefit of others.

Everyday politics of development

It has been suggested that there is a tendency among development NGOs in the South to converge towards variations of Western dominated neo-liberal and liberal-democratic development agendas. I have already stipulated that I do not agree with this notion of a hegemonic development discourse. Here, I want to address the underlying concern of those authors debating this matter, namely, that such convergence leads to the 'depolticization' of development, or as Ferguson (1990) aptly put it, that development has become an 'anti-politics machine'. For the case of

the NGO Consortium of this book this is clearly not true. They are influenced by development agendas, but have also deliberately chosen to take their own political positions. Are they just exceptions? I do not think so. Other NGOs working among indigenous peoples, for example in Guatemala, Bangladesh and Peru, have undergone similar histories of tension between revolutionary, indigenous and development discourses and agendas, with varying outcomes. Numerous other NGOs identify with alternative ideological notions or are actively engaged in political, social or religious movements. The observed convergence is, to my mind, therefore an exaggeration.

How can this exaggeration be explained? Firstly, it may result from a lack of acknowledgement of the multiple realities of NGOs. NGOs may adopt particular development agendas at certain interfaces, but endow them with their own meanings, while at the same time propagating other agendas elsewhere. Secondly, it may result from a Western-centric perspective. The announcement of the end of ideology in the West (among certain groups) has, to my mind, framed the observations regarding global processes and trends. As a result, manifestations of ideology are not recognized or they are relegated to the margins by considering them remnants of a by-gone era. Thirdly, ideological variations are more difficult to appreciate today than during the days when the world of development was neatly divided between Marxist, modernist and traditionalists, each with their own institutional bastions. Nonetheless, they continue to exist and their resurgence can be observed in many places.

The future of development NGOs is likely to be much more diversified than the observers of convergence expect. With or without the label of NGO, organising processes will continue to shape differential development outcomes. There is always the risk, of course, that such situations turn ugly and that NGOs may exacerbate violent conflicts, promote exclusion and accentuate marginalization. But I expect that working towards closing the enormous and growing gap in the quality of living conditions, socio-economic welfare and life-expectancy in an increasingly global but unequal world will also continue to be a major concern for NGOs. Commitment to values which advance public and collective interests and that radically side with the poor will continue to be an important element in the ideological visions of many NGOs.

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Summary

Records and Reputations: Everyday Politics of a Philippine Development NGO

This study looks into the working of policies, practices and accountability of NGOs. It is based on fieldwork with one development NGO in the Cordillera of the Philippines: the Cordillera Women NGO, or CWNGO (a pseudonym). Through this study I wanted to find out why certain groups of actors form organizations that they call an NGO, and how they ascribe meanings to the organization in practice. Meaning making is central to everyday practice, since it underlies the numerous small and big, pro-active and responsive decisions and actions that together make up the organization. In addition, the study focuses on matters of everyday politics. On the one hand, this entails the way ideology was important in shaping the organization. On the other, this involves the question how NGOs acquire legitimation as a development organization *vis-à-vis* relevant other parties, including clients, donors and constituency. This means that I look into processes by which NGO actors convince stakeholders that a situation requires development, that NGO intervention is indispensable and appropriate, and that the NGO has no self-interest in the envisaged programme.

The approach I developed for this rests on three pillars. Firstly, I use an actor orientation. Such an orientation starts with the premise that social actors have agency. They reflect upon their experiences and what happens around them and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to development. An actor orientation recognizes the large range of constraints that impinge on social actors, but emphasizes that such constraints operate through people. To find out how NGOs work in a particular environment I followed their actors in their different domains of work, studying how NGO practices come about and acquire meaning, through formal manifestations and actions as well as more informal everyday operations.

Secondly, the study focuses on how people (not just anthropologists) grapple with the relation between processes and things. In their everyday practices people have a practical awareness of the process nature of organizations and other phenomena. Yet, they simultaneously adhere to thing notions about the same. One focus of the study was how actors accommodate these different notions, how they use them strategically, and how they respond to other people's thing notions. One such a thing is the label of NGO. By most definitions, development NGOs are intermediary organizations that bring about development for poor and marginalized people. Instead I defined the name of NGO as a label claiming the organization does good for the development of others. The question then becomes why actors take on this identity and how they find recognition as the do-good organizations implied in the label. Another class of things of particular interest is representations. Through their accounts and practices NGO actors convey images about what their organization is, does and wants. Unlike the multiple realities and nitty-gritty of

everyday practices, representations provide a single understanding and closure. As John Law stated, instead of asking ourselves whether a representation corresponds to reality, we should be concerned with the workability and legitimacy of a representation. Through this study, then, I wanted to see how actors compose different representations, and the contests involved in their efforts to enrol others in accepting them.

Given my interest in issues of meanings and legitimation, discourse is important. Discourses are more or less coherent sets of references for understanding and acting upon the world around us. As was pointed out by Foucault, discourses intertwine knowledge and power. However, how discourse works, how it exactly intertwines knowledge and power is a matter for debate. This study spoke of the 'duality of discourse', following Giddens' notion of the 'duality of structure'. There are always multiple discourses and actors find room for manoeuvre to renegotiate them. The other side of the duality of discourse stipulates that discourses can indeed become powerful, although never hegemonic. The more dominant a discourse, the more it operates as a set of rules about what can and cannot be said and done and about what.

These three pillars of my approach are elaborated in chapter 1. Chapter 2 reviews how social movement discourses are constructed and what this means for the relation between leaders and followers, as well as for power struggles in the movement. This is elaborated with a case of social resistance against hydro-electric schemes in the Chico River of the Cordillera. Chapter 3 addresses the question of how, in a situation of multiple realities, a particular discourse becomes dominant. It shows the struggles of a political movement aiming to restore its grip on development NGOs, and how women's organizations endeavoured to accommodate gender issues in a dominant political discourse. The chapter ends with a discussion of the multi-dimensional working of a powerful discourse, -as coercing, convincing and seducing-, which makes understandable why social actors submit themselves to an ideological regime that confines their room for manoeuvre.

Chapter 4 enters the life world of village women. These women identify different meanings of development and cleverly play these out in dealing with the ensemble of development projects in their community. However, their appropriation of development interventions leads to unintended changes, in particular the erosion of the position of elder women. Chapter 5 elaborates the room for manoeuvre of NGOs. On the basis of a number of cases, it is concluded that villagers are much more decisive in the outcome of organizing processes than the NGOs. Chapter 6 provides a theoretical analysis of the concept of accountability and leads to the conclusion that transparency is a myth. A case study following a conflict in a weaving project for women shows that, instead of revealing what really happens in the localities, accounts are permeated by what happens in the accountability process.

Chapter 7 explores how NGO actors in their everyday practices give meaning to the organization. This question turns out to be much more complex than 'management-directing-the-organization', or 'management-versus-the-rest' perspectives, can account for. The chapter shows how, through the symbolic use of particular locales, social networks and cultural institutions, a certain coherence

nonetheless emerges. Chapter 8 gives a social analysis of successful NGO leadership. It is organized around the life history of one NGO leader, who was followed in her dealings with international arenas and funding agencies. NGO leaders appear as brokers of meaning. They enrol stakeholders to acknowledge their position, and accept their representation of situations, organizations and themselves. Chapter 9 deals with funding agencies. An extended case study is presented of the relation between CWNGO and a UN related program, which ended because the donor claimed the NGO was not efficient and was not accountable to its target group. Underlying this outcome were complex factors including organizational competition, political differences and different interpretations of 'partnership'.

Chapter 10 is the conclusion. It outlines some implications of the study for issues of NGO everyday politics. Politics of legitimation are closely linked to accountability, which is considered a problematic issue. My analysis corroborates this. There does not seem to be a single solution or methodology to realize accountability. We shall always need to critically improvise, combine methods and make the best of them.

Those that demand accountability, in particular donors, should acknowledge different modes of accountability instead of solely relying on formal accountability procedures. Perhaps this may bring them to invest more in trust and less in disciplining through detailed accountability demands. In particular they should invest in becoming trustworthy partners of development NGOs thereby forging the moral commitment of NGOs to live up to their promises. It was also concluded that the everyday politics of legitimation that tend to corrupt accountability also contain pressures to move towards more meaningful accountability. NGOs are vulnerable to losing their good name. The easiest way to protect one's good name is by living up to one's proclaimed standards. If they don't succeed, they risk losing their appeal for funding agencies, their legitimacy as advocates, their credibility in the eyes of the media, and eventually their status as an organization that is seen to do good for the benefit of others.

It has been suggested that there is a tendency among development NGOs in the South to converge towards variations of Western dominated neo-liberal and liberal-democratic development agendas. On the basis of this study I find this notion an exaggeration. The future of development NGOs is likely to be much more diversified than observers of convergence expect. With or without the label of NGO, organising processes will continue to shape differential development outcomes. I expect that commitment to values which advance public and collective interests and that radically side with the poor will continue to be an important element of the ideological visions of many NGOs.

Samenvatting

Rekenschap en Reputatie, Politiek in de Alledaagse Praktijk van een Filippijnse Ontwikkelings NGO

Dit is een studie naar de werking van beleid, handelen en verantwoordingsprocessen van niet-gouvernementele ontwikkelingsorganisaties. Het werk is gebaseerd op veldwerk in zo'n organisatie in de Cordillera van de Filippijnen: de 'Cordillera Women NGO', CWNGO (een pseudoniem.) Met deze studie wilde ik uitvinden waarom bepaalde groepen actoren (mensen) organisaties vormen die ze 'NGO' noemen en hoe ze in hun handelen betekenis verlenen aan deze organisatie. Betekenisverlening staat centraal in het alledaags handelen omdat dit ten grondslag ligt aan alle kleine en grote pro-actieve en reactieve beslissingen en acties die tezamen de organisatie bepalen. Daarnaast heb ik belangstelling voor alledaagse politieke processen. Aan de ene kant behelst dit de rol van ideologie in organisaties. Aan de andere kant gaat het om de vraag hoe NGO's zich legitimeren als ontwikkelingsorganisaties in de ogen van hun klanten, donoren en hun achterban. Dit betekent dat ik geïnteresseerd ben in die processen waarin NGOs belanghebbenden overtuigen dat een bepaalde ontwikkeling nodig is, dat de NGO dit moet en kan bewerkstelligen en dat de NGO geen eigenbelang heeft bij het voorgestelde programma.

De benadering die ik voor deze studie heb ontwikkeld rust op drie pijlers. In de eerste plaats gebruik ik een actor-oriëntatie. Zo'n oriëntatie is gebaseerd op het idee dat actoren agency hebben. Zij reflecteren op hun ervaringen en op wat er om hen heen gebeurt en gebruiken hun kennis en capaciteiten om ontwikkelingen te interpreteren en er vervolgens op te reageren. Een actor-oriëntatie erkent dat er allerlei beperkingen zijn die actoren in de weg staan, maar benadrukt dat deze alleen werkzaam zijn via de actoren zelf. Om na te gaan hoe NGO's in een bepaalde omgeving functioneren heb ik de stafleden gevolgd in hun verschillende werkvelden. Ik bestudeer daarbij hoe hun handelen tot stand komt en betekenis krijgt in formele uitdrukkingsvormen alsmede in activiteiten in het meer informele handelen van alledag.

In de tweede plaats richt deze studie zich op hoe mensen, en niet alleen antropologen, worstelen met de relatie tussen 'processen' en 'dingen'. In hun alledaags handelen zijn actoren zich bewust van het procesmatige karakter van organisaties, terwijl ze deze tegelijkertijd als dingen beschouwen. Een aandachtspunt van het onderzoek is hoe actoren omgaan met deze verschillende interpretaties, hoe ze deze strategisch gebruiken en hoe ze er op reageren als anderen dat doen. De meeste definities zien NGO's als intermediaire organisaties die ontwikkeling bewerkstellingen voor arme en gemarginaliseerde mensen. Ik definieer daarentegen het begrip NGO als een label, een etiket dat uitdraagt dat de organisatie goed doet voor de ontwikkeling van anderen. De vraag is dan waarom actoren hun organisaties deze identiteit laten aannemen en hoe ze erkenning vinden als de weldoeners die ze claimen te zijn. Een ander soort dingen die belangrijk zijn voor dit onderzoek zijn representaties. Zowel door hun rapportages als door hun handelen dragen NGO-actoren bepaalde

noties uit over wat hun organisatie is en doet en waar ze voor staat. In tegenstelling tot de meervoudige realiteiten en details in het handelen van alledag geven deze representaties een enkelvoudig en afgerond beeld. Zoals John Law beweert moeten wij, in plaats van na te gaan of een bepaald beeld correspondeert met de werkelijkheid, nagaan hoe representaties geaccepteerd worden. Met dit onderzoek wilde ik zien hoe actoren verschillende representaties samenstellen en hoe zij zich inspinnen om anderen te overtuigen van bepaalde verbeeldingen van de werkelijkheid.

Mijn interesse in processen van betekenisgeving en legitimering brengt me op het belang van het begrip 'discours' (vertoog). Discourzen zijn min of meer coherente referenties om de wereld om ons heen te begrijpen en naar onze hand te zetten. Zoals Foucault aangaf verwickelen discoursen kennis en macht. Hoe dit precies gebeurt is nog steeds onderwerp van debat. Dit onderzoek gaat uit van de 'dualiteit van discours' in navolging van Giddens' begrip over de 'dualiteit van structuren'. Omdat er altijd meerdere discoursen zijn, hebben actoren de ruimte om over hun betekenis te onderhandelen. De andere kant van de 'dualiteit van discours' houdt in dat discoursen inderdaad dominant kunnen worden, zij het niet hegeemonisch. Hoe dominantier een discours, des te meer lijkt het op een serie spelregels over wat wèl en niet gezegd en gedaan kan worden en waarvoor.

Deze drie pijlers van mijn benadering worden verder uitgelegd in hoofdstuk 1. Hoofdstuk 2 bespreekt hoe discoursen van sociale bewegingen worden geconstrueerd en wat dit betekent voor de relaties tussen leiders en volgelingen en voor machtsstrijd binnen deze bewegingen. Dit gebeurt aan de hand van de geschiedenis van verzet tegen de aanleg van dammen in de Chico rivier in de Cordillera. Hoofdstuk 3 behandelt de vraag hoe in situaties van meervoudige realiteiten een bepaald discours desalniettemin dominant wordt. Het geeft inzicht in de verwikkelingen van een politieke beweging die zijn greep over de NGOs in de beweging dreigt te verliezen en laat zien hoe vrouwenorganisaties tevergeefs moeten doen om gender een plek te geven in een steeds dominantier discours. Het hoofdstuk sluit af met een bespreking van de multi-dimensionale werking van een invloedrijk discours dat dwingt, overtuigt en verleidt, wat verklaarbaar kan maken waarom actoren zich overgeven aan een ideologische regiem, ook al beperkt dit hun bewegingsvrijheid.

Hoofdstuk 4 stapt in de leefwereld van dorpsvrouwen. Zij onderscheiden verschillende betekenissen van het begrip ontwikkeling en maken hier handig gebruik van in de afstemming van ontwikkelingsinitiatieven in hun gemeenschap. De manier waarop zij zich ontwikkelingsinitiatieven toe-eigenen leidt echter ook tot ongewenste veranderingen. Met name dragen zij bij aan de teloorgang van de positie van oudere vrouwen. Hoofdstuk 5 behandelt de handelingsruimte van NGO's. Op basis van een aantal onderzochte gevallen kom ik tot de conclusie dat dorpelingen veel meer bepalend zijn voor de uitkomst van lokale organisatieprocessen dan de NGO's. Hoofdstuk 6 geeft een theoretische analyse van het begrip rekenschap (accountability). Dit leidt tot de conclusie dat transparantie op een mythe berust. Daarna volg ik een conflict in een weversproject waaruit blijkt dat verantwoordingsprocessen niet duidelijk maken wat er in de gemeenschap gebeurt. Rapportages zijn in plaats daarvan doordrongen van hetgeen gebeurt in het verantwoordingsproces zelf. Hoofdstuk 7 verkent hoe stafleden van NGO's

betekenis geven aan de organisatie in hun alledaags handelen. Dit blijkt veel ingewikkelder te zijn dan simpelweg management dat de organisatie leidt of management tegenover de rest van de organisatie. Het hoofdstuk geeft aan dat het symbolisch gebruik van bepaalde lokaliteiten, sociale netwerken en culturele instituties tot een zekere samenhang leidt. Hoofdstuk 8 geeft een sociale analyse van succesvol NGO-leiderschap. Het is opgebouwd uit het levensverhaal van één NGO-leider die gevolg wordt in haar activiteiten in internationale arena's en in haar omgang met financieringsorganisaties. NGO-leiders blijken bemiddelaars te zijn in processen van betekenisgeving (brokers of meaning). Zij overtuigen belanghebbenden om hun positie te erkennen en om hun verbeeldingen van situaties, organisaties en henzelf te accepteren. Hoofdstuk 9 gaat over financieringsorganisaties. Een uitgebreide case wordt behandeld van CWNGO en een programma van de Verenigde Naties dat beëindigd werd omdat de fondsorganisatie beweerde dat de NGO niet efficiënt was en geen verantwoording aflegde aan de doelgroep. Deze voorstelling van zaken bleek een complex proces te maskeren waarin competitie, politieke tegenstellingen en verschillende interpretaties van partnerschap een grote rol speelden.

Hoofdstuk 10 is de conclusie. Het geeft enige implicaties van dit onderzoek voor het begrijpen van de politiek van het dagelijks handelen in NGO's. Legitimering is een politieke zaak die nauw samenhangt met rekenschap. Dit wordt over het algemeen als problematisch gezien. Mijn analyse bevestigt dit. Er lijkt geen eenvoudige oplossing of methode te zijn om verantwoording te verzekeren. We zullen altijd kritisch moeten improviseren, methoden moeten combineren en er het beste van moeten maken. Zij die rekenschap vragen, met name donoren, zouden verschillende vormen moeten erkennen in plaats van alleen te vertrouwen op formele verantwoordingsprocedures. Zij zouden met name moeten proberen om betrouwbare partners te worden van ontwikkelings NGO's om zodoende deze organisaties moreel aan zich te binden, zodat zij eerder geneigd zijn hun verplichtingen na te komen. Een andere conclusie is dat de politiek van legitimering die leidt tot de uitholling van verantwoordingsprocessen tevens druk uitoefent om tot andere vormen van rekenschap te komen. NGO's zijn kwetsbaar omdat zij een goede naam te verliezen hebben. De makkelijkste manier om hun goede naam te bewaren is aan hun eigen standaarden te voldoen. Als zij daar niet in slagen lopen zij het risico hun aantrekkingskracht voor fondsorganisaties te verliezen, hun bestaansgrond als spreekbuis, hun geloofwaardigheid in de ogen van de media en uiteindelijk hun status als weldoende organisatie. Er is vaak gesuggereerd dat ontwikkelings NGO's in het zuiden in toenemende mate neigen naar door het Westen gedomineerde, neo-liberale en liberaal-democratische ontwikkelingsagenda's. Op basis van mijn onderzoek vind ik dit overdreven. Zij die dit voorspellen onderschatten waarschijnlijk de gevarieerdheid onder ontwikkelings NGO's nu en in de toekomst. Al dan niet onder de naam NGO zullen ontwikkelingsorganisaties en -processen op verschillende manier vorm krijgen. Ik verwacht dat een keuze voor waarden die collectieve belangen voorrang geven en radicaal de kant kiezen van de armen belangrijk zal blijven in de visie van veel NGO's.

Curriculum Vitae

Thea Hilhorst was born in Voorburg, the Netherlands, on 28 September 1961. In 1980 she moved to Wageningen where she combined a study of rural development sociology at the Agricultural University with theatre and solidarity work. Among others, she was editor of a series of books on Philippine women. She graduated with distinction in 1988, on a thesis concerning organizing processes of urban poor women in the Philippines, where she had done fieldwork in 1986/87. After several years of employment in development-related organizations, first in the Philippine Information and Documentation Centre, then at the Asia desk of Cebemo (presently part of Cordaid), she moved back to Wageningen University where she worked for different departments until today. As a research fellow of the Department of Air Pollution, she did a year research for the Federation of Miners' Trade Unions on health and safety of mineworkers, comprising fieldwork in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Peru and Brazil. She then did research for and with agrarian women organizations in the Netherlands who wanted to improve the relation with their constituency. For this research, which was mediated by the Wageningen Science Shop, she was attached to the Department of Communication Science.

In 1993, she moved to Baguio City, the Philippines, to become researcher and evaluator of a local development NGO, emphasizing participatory approaches. Her three-year stay in the Philippines coincided with the fieldwork for this Ph.D. project. Upon her return in Wageningen in 1996, she drafted her dissertation as a research fellow (AIO) of the Rural Development Sociology Group. Since 1998, she is a lecturer at Disaster Studies, which is a special chair attached to the same group. Among others, she conducted, together with students, a research into the villagization policy of the post-war / post-genocide Rwanda government

She published on the following issues:

- stake holder analyses around the issue of mineworkers' health and safety;
- dynamics between national and local agrarian women organizations in the Netherlands;
- local development discourses;
- (new) social movements;
- dynamics of non-government organizations in the Philippines;
- villagization in Rwanda;
- evaluation of humanitarian aid;
- local capacities for peace.

Acronyms

ADDA	Anti-Dam Democratic Alliance
AIWN	Asian Indigenous Women Network
Amihan	National alliance of peasant women's organizations
BPO	Binasan People's Organization
CADCI	Regulation under DAO-2 for the registration of ancestral domains
CBC	Cordillera Broad Coalition
CECAP	Central Cordillera Agricultural Programme
CODE-NGO	Caucus of Development NGO Networks
CPA	Cordillera People's Alliance
CPLA	Cordillera People's Liberation Army
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CWNGO	Cordillera Women Non-Governmental Organization
DA	Department of Agriculture
DAO-2	Government Programme on Ancestral Lands
EC	European Community
GABRIELA	General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action
ILA	Igorot Liberation Army
INNABUYOG	Regional Indigenous Women's Organization
IP	Indigenous People
Kalayaan	Katipunan ng Kababaihan Para sa Kalayaan (Women's Movement for Freedom)
KLAI	Kayatuan Ladies' Association Incorporated
KMK	Kilusang ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (Women Workers' Movement)
KMP	Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Philippine Peasants Movement)
LUPPO	Luaya People's Organization
Makibaka	Women's Movement of the early 1970s, later continued underground as the women's organization of the National Democratic Front.
MOUNT	Mountainous Development NGO
MSAC	Montañosa Social Action Centre
NDF	National Democratic Front
NGO	Non-government organization
NPA	New People's Army
NPC	National Power Corporation
PANAMIN	Presidential Assistant on National Minorities
PEFA	Protestant European Funding Agency
Pilipina	Feminist Women's Organization

PO	People's Organization
PRRM	Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement
PTA	Parent Teacher Organization
RIC	Rural Improvement Club
Samakana	Samahan ng Malayang Kababaihang Nagkakaisa (National alliance of urban poor women's organizations)
SPRINC	Self-help Programme for Indigenous and Tribal Communities
UNA	United Nations Agency
WISAP	Women's International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Glossary

Ading	address used for younger siblings
Amok	state of murderous frenzy
Apo Dios	Father God
Balasang di kalman	'the girls of yesteryears'
Barangay	administrative unit under a municipality, which is governed by an elected captain and council
BONGO	Business-organized NGO (NGO term)
Bodong	peace pact (Kalinga term)
Bolo	cutting knife
Camote	sweet potato
Carabao	water buffalo
Chica-chica	small talk
COME 'N GOs	NGOs that never or only briefly operate (NGO term)
Come-'n-goes	Seasonal migrants (village term)
Debate	reference to crisis in the movement that started in 1992 (ND term)
Deep Penetrating Agents	military infiltrators in the movement (ND term)
Exposure	stay with poor people to be exposed to their living conditions (NGO term)
Facipulation	facilitation and manipulation (NGO term)
Gangsa	brass gong, central to Cordillera celebrations
Ginebra	gin
GRINGO	Government-run NGO (NGO term)
G-string	A long strip of cloth wrapped around as a waistband with the end-parts hanging at the front and back covering the loins
Hiya	sensitivity, timidity, related to feelings of shame
Ifugao	local vernacular, mainly used in the province of Ifugao
Igorot	generic name for the inhabitants of the Cordillera
Imon	jealousy
Ilokano	regional vernacular, used in the Cordillera as 'lingua franca'
Kaigorotan	CPA concept in 1996 representing all 'tribes' in the Cordillera
Kakaasi	literally 'the pitiful', the 'indigent' people
Kankanaey	local vernacular, mainly used in Mountain Province
Kalinga	local vernacular, mainly used in the province of Kalinga
Makulit	stubborn
Manang	respectful address for older sister, also used for older women
Manong	respectful address for older brother, also used older men

Middle Forces	city- based, middle-class professionals (NGO term)
Organizer	staff facilitating local organizing processes (NGO term)
Pagta ti Bodong	peace pact agreement
Pakikisama	conform or give concession to group wishes to maintain smooth interpersonal relations (Tagalog term)
Pakiramdam	feeling the other; tendency to act according to what one thinks is the desire of higher-ups (Tagalog term)
Pechen	peace pact (Bontok term)
Pinoy	Filipino
Principio	'principle', refers to the movement's ideology (ND term)
Pulutan	a popular appetizer made of intestines fried in blood
Reaffirmists	loyalist NDF faction after the 1992 split
Rectification	campaign in NDF to go back to the basics following 1992 crisis in the movement (ND term)
Rejectionists	those who abandoned the NDF in the 1992 crisis of the movement (ND term)
Reformist	affecting change within the ruling system, without effectively supplanting it (ND term)
Sitio	a subdivision of a barangay
Solid organizing	community organizing according to step-by-step model (ND NGO term)
Step-by-step	principle of organizing model (ND NGO term)
Sweeping organizing	superficial work in communities (ND NGO term)
Tagalog	linguistic base of the national Philippine language
Tampu	a large range of 'sulking behaviour'
Tao	common people
Tsinelas	rubber slippers
Turfing	tendency among NGOs to monopolize clients (NGO term)
Utang na loob	life-long moral obligations
Vochong	peace pact (Kalinga language, synonym of <i>Bodong</i>)

