



The Hague, The Netherlands



United Nations Development Programme

Bureau of Development Policy

New York, NY

ISS/UNDP Land, Poverty and Public Action Policy Paper No. 1

**Agrarian Reform and Rural Development:
Historical Overview and Current Issues**

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Introduction

Land reform is back on the policy agenda of international development institutions as well as of many nation states. Globally, poverty still has primarily a rural face with two-thirds of the world's poor constituted by the rural poor. Its persistence has defied policy makers for decades despite sustained efforts by national governments, international institutions and civil society. Effective control over productive resources, especially land, by the rural poor is crucial to their capacity to construct a rural livelihood and overcome poverty. This is because in many agrarian settings a significant portion of the income of the rural poor still comes from farming, despite far-reaching livelihood diversification processes that occurred in different places over time.¹ Hence, lack of access to land is strongly related to poverty and inequality.² It is therefore not altogether surprising that the World Bank's 2006 *World Development Report* that focuses on the question of equity has underscored the importance of land access (World Bank, 2005, chapter 8). However, policy discussions around the Millennium Development Goals are yet to systematically and significantly include the issue of wealth and power redistribution in the rural areas, i.e. agrarian reform, especially in a situation where majority of the world's poor are rural poor (CPRC,2005).

But unlike in past theorizing and practice of land reform, where the central state took a commanding role, in contemporary thinking about land policies a decisive role is assigned to 'free' market forces in land re-allocation and use.³ More than a decade into its experimentation and implementation, the new type of land reform should be examined more systematically, both in theory and practice, as to whether it has delivered what it has promised, and if not, why not. Yet, it is important that a parallel critical evaluation of ongoing conventional state-directed land reforms wherever these have been implemented must be carried out as well. The end goal is to produce empirically grounded conceptual reflection on land policies and their relevance to rural poverty eradication within the changed and changing global, national and local context.

This land policy paper series gathers evidence on the impact of the different land policies, and the varying strategies and approaches to implement them, on reducing poverty and social exclusion in the rural areas, with an end view of identifying possible sets of workable alternative policy options in contemporary

¹ A recent comprehensive crossnational comparative study is Bryceson, Kay, and Mooij (2000). The explanation by Ellis (2000) about livelihood diversification due to necessity or by choice offers relevant analytic insights. Lahiff and Scoones (2000) offer equally important insights.

² Important studies on the relationship between lack of access to land and poverty include Griffin (1976, 1974) and El-Ghonemy (1990); most recent re-arguments within broadly similar framework but amidst changing context include Herring (2003). De Janvry, Gordillo, Platteau, and Sadoulet (2001) is a recent collection of (generally economic) studies that include both mainstream scholars and others who do not necessarily or fully subscribe to the current mainstream economic doctrines.

³ Deininger and Binswanger (1999) and World Bank (2003) are the landmark publications that are key to understanding the main features of the contemporary mainstream land policies. The World Development Report 2006 (on equity and development) has addressed the issue of land access, but has not put forward any new insights and has simply repeated the arguments and claims in other World Bank documents and by other mainstream economists, dismissing the growing body of literature that is critical of these arguments and claims (World Bank, 2005, chapter 8).

developing countries and transitional economies. This study maps out and critically analyzes the different types of land policies that have been carried out in a number of national settings. It has been guided by a broad conceptualization of redistributive land reform that includes land titling, restitution of indigenous lands, indigenous land claims, land settlement, tenancy and rental arrangements, farm consolidation and parcelization, along with the complementary measures necessary to facilitate the success of redistributive reform. Finally, this introductory essay puts the discussion in this land policy paper series within the broader historical perspective and identifies common themes that have been subject of the country case studies.

The ten countries examined in this study are Armenia, Bolivia, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, Namibia, the Philippines, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. These ten countries, cutting across regions, represent broad types of historical contexts within which different land policies have been carried out more recently. The historical context is important to take into consideration partly because it provides us a good idea about the character of the pre-existing agrarian structure and its relationship with existing poverty – the main objects of the redistributive agenda in any land reform.

The first type involves those countries that have not seen significant land reform in the past but since the 1990s land reform has emerged as important component of the national development policy and political agendas and has seen greater degrees of implementation. In this research project, this is represented by Brazil and the Philippines. Both countries have seen state-driven attempts to redistribute some lands in the 1950s-1970s, but with less than significant outcomes in terms of the quantity of lands redistributed. Both countries have had witnessed strong militant peasant movements in the 1950s-1960s, been under military dictatorship, and have witnessed regime national transition almost at the same time, in the mid-1980s, coinciding with the resurgence of militant rural social movements demanding land reform (Fox, 1990; Lara and Morales, 1990; Franco, 2001). Carmen Deere and Leonilde Servolo de Medeiros as well as Saturnino Borrás Jr., Danilo Carranza and Ricardo Reyes analyze land policies in Brazil and the Philippines, respectively, and explain why and how have the land reform been resurrected in these countries in the mid-1980s onward, and with what outcomes. As shown in these studies, both countries have also witnessed the introduction of broadly pro-market approaches to land reform beginning in the later part of the 1990s onward – side by side the existence of a state-driven land reform program – and Deere and Medeiros as well as Borrás et al examine such approaches and their initial outcomes, particularly looking into their impact on poverty and inequality. Finally, both countries have active contemporary agrarian reform movements, and these are analyzed within an ‘interactive framework’ in the study of state-society relations (Fox, 1993, 2004).

The second type pertains to those national settings that have had significant land reforms in the past within broadly capitalist oriented development frameworks, but that there are important ongoing changes in land policies that have profound implications to the peasantry. In this land policy paper series, this type is represented by Bolivia and Egypt as both countries have undergone important land reforms in the 1950s-1960s, although these major land reforms had not resulted in significant degrees of poverty reduction in both countries, and both countries are currently confronted by important changes in land policy regimes. Cristóbal Kay and Miguel Urioste, as well as Ray Bush, examine the past land policies and their impact on

poverty in Bolivia and Egypt, respectively. They also critically analyze the key features of contemporary adjustments being made in land policies in these countries, and their impact on poverty and social exclusion.

The third type involves those countries that have undergone socialist construction in the past, but are now currently promoting varying forms and degrees of market-oriented land policies. In this research undertaking, this type is represented by Armenia, Ethiopia, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. These countries, with different historical backgrounds, had carried out socialist-oriented land reforms in the past, biased in favor of a combination of farm collectives and state farms. Since the early 1990s, all of these countries started to carry out, in varying extents and pace, broadly pro-market land policies, giving importance to individualized property rights over land, with varying outcomes and implications. Max Spoor (Armenia), Gebru Mersha and Mwangi wa Githinji (Ethiopia), Azizur Rahman Khan (Uzbekistan), and Haroon Akram Lodhi (Vietnam) examine the historical evolution of the land policies in these four countries, the recent market-oriented changes in land policies, and their subsequent impact on poverty and inequality.

The fourth type pertains to those countries that did not have a long history of land policies, and that the ongoing land policies that are very much framed within the post-colonial context. This type is represented, in this land policy paper series, by Zimbabwe and Namibia. In both countries, land policies have been shaped by the way colonialism have been ended, as well as the character of the nationalist governments that took over state power. Both have somehow adopted, or were forced to adopt, generally market-oriented land policies, although Zimbabwe started to break away from this framework when the Mugabe government launched its ‘fast-track’ state-instigated land redistribution campaign beginning in 1996. Sam Moyo (Zimbabwe) as well as Jan Kees van Donge and George Eiseb (Namibia) examine the evolution of the pro-market land policies and their impact on poverty and social exclusion. They critically analyze the continuing legacy of colonialism far beyond the formal end of colonialism as manifested partly in the persistent control over vast tracts of land by white settlers of European origin.

Historical contextualization of the emergence of varying types of agrarian structures within countries, as done in each of the country case study in this study, is important towards a better understanding of land-based social relations and state-society interactions around land policies. However, examining land policies in a global level is equally relevant and important towards a fuller understanding of the broader and longer historical context within which land reforms appeared, disappeared and reappeared in the development policy agendas. This will be discussed in the succeeding section.

Revisiting Past Land Reforms

The terms ‘land reform’ and ‘agrarian reform’ are commonly interchanged to mean the same thing, i.e. to reform existing agrarian structure. However, some scholars find it useful to distinguish these terms, i.e. land reform pertains to the reform of the distribution of landed property rights, while agrarian reform refers to land reform and complementary socio-economic and political reforms (see, e.g. Thiesenhusen, 1989: 7-9). By making this distinction, analysts hoped that by highlighting this fact it would

draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of these complementary measures for improving the chances of success of the reform sector. In this paper, we are aware of this distinction, although we will use the two terms interchangeably.

Cycles of land reforms had been carried out in many parts of the world during the distant past. In its varying forms and scale, land reform was carried out during the ancient times, beginning with the Greeks and Romans. Much later, the French Revolution ushered in the era of modern types of land reform after the ancient regime and feudalism were overthrown in that country. Major land reforms were also carried out in many parts of Europe, including Russia where, prior to the 1917 Bolshevik assumption of state power, at least two significant land reform initiatives were carried out. But it was the past century that witnessed the most numerous land reforms in human history, starting with the 1910 Mexican revolution. Prior to World War II, land reform was also implemented in the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) where the role of land reform and peasants in the broader industrial development was hotly debated in the 1920s and early 1930s. Land reform became a favoured policy by most countries immediately after World War II, a condition that lasted for a few decades, decisively ending in the early 1980s.⁴ The reasons for carrying out land reforms had been varied between and within nations during the period of 1940s-1980s, although two dominant categories could be noted, namely, economic and socio-political reasons.

Economic Reasons

The economic basis for land reform was quite powerful an imperative for many of these initiatives. This is founded on the interlinked assumptions that large farms under-utilize land, while small farms are wasteful of labour, resulting in low level of land and labour productivity and consequently leading to poverty.⁵ Many agrarian settings are marked by significant degrees of unemployment and under-employment of labour and relative scarcity of land. Hence, from an economic perspective, it is sensible to raise land productivity than to try to increase labour productivity.⁶ There were no major disagreements among scholars on the issue that many of the pre-existing large farms were generally inefficient and needed restructuring, although the main pre-occupation that underpinned debates on land reform then was the question of national economic development. It is on the question of strategic perspective, i.e. what type of development paradigm land reform is to serve or be taken to, or to what developmental end should the rural surplus be made to serve, that positions diverge. This has direct relationship to the closely linked debate on what type of organization of production should be adopted, i.e. individual or collective farms.

⁴ Some works that provide relevant crossnational and historical overviews include Tuma (1965), Jones (1991), King (1977), Tai (1974), Christodoulou (1990), Jacoby (1971), Prosterman, Temple and Hanstad (1990), Warriner (1969), Paige (1975), Moore (1967), and Sobhan (1993). For recent conceptual and methodological discussion about comparative studies in land reform, see Borrás (2006).

⁵ Refer, for example, to the influential study edited by Barraclough (1973) in the case of Latin America. But see Johnston (forthcoming) for fresh arguments on labour-related issues in the land reform debate.

⁶ Refer to the discussions by Berry and Cline (1979), Barraclough and Domike (1966), Dorner and Kanel (1971). For more recent discussion on the economic basis see Binswanger and Deininger (1997, 1996) and Deininger and Binswanger (1999).

Through time, and amidst rich theoretical exchanges and practical experiences, diverse conceptual positions and empirical insights were put forward, revolving around the contentious issues of the role of agriculture in national development, ideological frameworks, and types of organization of production, among others.⁷ There are however two persistently dominant positions. On the one side, there is the position that land reform should eventually take the course of the industrial-urban path to national development, generally favouring a more collectivist type of land reform,⁸ and on the other side, the agriculture-rural path to development, generally favouring a land reform that promotes individual small family farms.⁹ Moreover and not altogether de-linked from the above-mentioned dichotomy, land reforms during the past century were also divided by their ideological perspectives, namely, capitalist- or socialist-oriented, although each camp is quite diverse. Broadly, in the former, land reform was used to develop private property rights further as a key institution in capitalist development, while in the latter land reform was used to liquidate private property rights to strengthen a socialist development largely driven by the state.¹⁰

In most non-socialist settings, the types of organization of production that were created during and after land reform were very much determined by the character of pre-existing agrarian structure. It was mainly the collectivist types of land reform communities that emerged in much of Latin America partly because of the character of pre-existing landholdings where large farmholdings were directly operated by landlords and where the contribution by peasants was mainly labour. In general, individual family farms emerged in East Asian land reforms partly because the pre-reform farms were smaller and were usually under sharecropping arrangements with tenant-farmers.

Meanwhile, in most socialist settings, two types of organizations of the reform sector came into being: state farms and collective/cooperative farms – and these were determined largely by both the conditions prior to the revolutionary take over of farms as well as the strategic developmental goals and approaches of the socialist central state. In some cases, the socialist state just took over plantations from corporate owners, foreign and domestic, recruited workers and continued the operation of these new state farms. In other cases, the state expropriated lands and redistributed them to peasants who were in turn organized into cooperatives. In Cuba after the revolution of 1959, both forms of land expropriation and organization of farms occurred, although state farms predominated (Ghai, Kay and Peek, 1988). However, in the 1990s, the pre-existing organizations of production have started to be transformed, especially affecting state farms which have been broken up into smaller landholdings that are operated through cooperatives with aspirations for greater production and marketing efficiency (Deere, 2000).

⁷ Refer, for example, to the relevant insights offered by Lehmann (1974), Harriss (1982), Ghose (1983a), Ghimire (2001), Kay (2002), Karshenas (2004), and Wuyts (1994).

⁸ Refer, for example, to Byres (1974); and more recently, Byres (2004a, 2004b) and Bernstein (2004, 2003, 2002).

⁹ Refer, for example, to Lipton (1974), and more recently, to Griffin, Khan and Ickowitz (2002).

¹⁰ For analytic insights in the context of socialist settings in Latin America, Asia and Africa, refer to FitzGerald (1985) for the Sandinista Nicaraguan case, Saith (1985) for the Chinese case, O'Laughlin (1996, 1995) for the case of Mozambique, Abate and Kiros (1983) for the Ethiopian case, and Fagan, Deere and Corragio (1986) for transnational, comparative perspective.

While it may seem that the forms of organizations that emerged out of land reforms in both capitalist and socialist settings were clustered neatly either as state or privately owned, individual or collectivist, in reality, the situations were diverse. Peasants subverted or revised the, or acquiesced to, state-imposed membership to cooperatives or collectives,¹¹ individual farmers joined together for purposes of achieving economies of scale in input and output markets, land rights were rented out and sold despite legal ban on such, workers' efficiency levels fluctuated in state-controlled industrial farming complexes, mechanization was developed in some places and not in others, and so on – with overall effect resulting in almost always unintended and unexpected outcomes of official policies.

Socio-Political Reasons

But while the economic basis of land reform was a crucial reason for carrying out land reform, a variety of socio-political imperatives had in fact and on most occasions, provided the critical push for such policies to be adopted and implemented by national governments. There were at least six interlinked broad types of socio-political reasons. First, on the eve of and immediately after World War II, the decolonization process spread like a prairie fire in much of what used to be called Third World. Land reform became an integral component of these processes in many national settings, such as in Algeria and Egypt, where emerging nationalist governments took over colonial lands and distributed these, or some of these, to their landless rural citizens. The decolonization process continued into the late 1950s until the 1970s in some remaining former colonies where, to varying extent, land reform also found its way into the main agenda of the nationalist governments that emerged, such as in Indonesia with the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960 and Zimbabwe with its land reform of 1980.¹²

Second, geo-political and ideological imperatives in the context of the build-up towards and during the Cold War provided crucial context and reason for the rise of land reform in the international and national policy agendas. The post-war 'division' of the world into the capitalist and socialist blocks had made the United States rush to consolidate its ideological and political hold in East Asia which was fronting the vast territories of the communist USSR and China. Land reform was a key component in the American consolidation of this region, where it imposed and financed sweeping land reforms in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan partly in reaction to the revolutionary land reform being carried out in China.¹³ The subsequent Cold War became an arena where the capitalist and socialist ideological perspectives battled against each other on different contentious themes, among which was the question of how to address the issue of rural poverty, through what type of land reform, and within what broader development framework. As communist- and socialist-inspired national liberation movements gained ground, some of which being

¹¹ See James Scott (1998) for an insightful overview account of farm mechanization in the USSR in the 1920s-1930s, as well as in the efforts to construct modern socialist farms and villages in Tanzania and Ethiopia in the 1970s-1980s.

¹² See Tsing (2002) for an historical analysis of the promulgation and subsequent implications of the Agrarian Law of 1960 in Indonesia. Refer to Bratton (1990) for the historical background and initial implementation of the Zimbabwean land reform.

¹³ Of course there are other important reasons, both internal and external to these countries, for carrying out land reform other than in reaction to the communist threat from China and the USSR. For varying analysis, see Kay (2002), Griffin, Khan and Ickowitz (2002), Tai (1974), and King (1977).

able to seize state power, the capitalist block took on the agenda of land reform with greater ideological vigour and sense of political urgency. American agents led by Wolf Ladejinsky crisscrossed the world to pressure national governments to carry out (a capitalist version of) 'pre-emptive' land reform (see Walinsky, 1977; Ross, 1998, Chp. 5; Putzel, 1992). Towards this end, the US instigated the formation of the Alliance for Progress in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1960s where land reform took a center-stage in the alliance's agenda. In short, land reform was used by the two contending camps as key policy ammunition (and shield) during the Cold War.

Third, land reform also became crucial component of national projects of victorious peasant-based revolutions. The prominence of land reform in this context is due partly to the fact that the demand for land by peasants was quite strongly internalized within the revolutionary government. But its prominence was also partly due to the revolutionary government's desire to consolidate its political legitimacy and to quell possible reactionary counter-revolution on the one hand, and the central state's need to proceed with its developmental project that would be financed to a significant extent by 'squeezing' agriculture of surplus factors of production. It was in this context that land reforms emerged and were implemented in Mexico, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Vietnam (Tannenbaum, 1929; Grindle, 1986; Collins, Lappè and Allen, 1982; Paige, 1975; Wolf, 1969). The Guatemalan land reform emerged in a similar context, but it was a case that saw immediate reversal through a counter-revolution (see Handy, 1994).

Fourth, in reaction to external and internal political pressure, land reform was used by central states to 'manage' rural unrest. While some of such rural unrests were communist-inspired, many should be seen as parts of ongoing cycles of peasant revolt against unjust and exploitative conditions, and their struggles for social justice, as in the cases of the Huk and Mau-Mau rebellions in the Philippines and Kenya. The conflagration of forcible land occupations, often met with violence from state and nonstate actors, that marked the countryside of many countries after the Second World War, such as those in Peru, the Philippines, northern Mexico, Indonesia (see, Wolf, 1969; Stavenhagen, 1971; Hobsbawm, 1974; Landsberger, 1974; Kerkvliet, 1993; Huizer, 2001; Kay, 2001; Redclift, 1978), and even in Italy, Portugal and southern Spain, unsettled national governments. The subsequent patches of successful regional land redistribution outcomes within these countries were testimonies of the effort of central states to respond, albeit selectively and partially, to these pockets of rural unrest.

Fifth, in other cases, land reform was used to legitimize and/or consolidate the claim to state power by one faction of the elite against another. This happened immediately after military take over of state power, like in Peru in the late 1960s, where the new government tried to debase possible elite challengers by expropriating their landholdings and to court popular support by redistributing lands to peasants (Kay, 1983), or in the Philippines during the Marcos authoritarian regime (Putzel, 1992; Riedinger, 1995). This also happened when Left political parties gained

electoral victories, such as those in Chile in the early 1970s (Castillo and Lehmann, 1983), as well as in the states of Kerala and West Bengal in India.¹⁴

Finally, land reform was used by the central state in its continuing state-building process. Land reform, and the usually accompanying land titling and colonization programs, required systematic and standardized cadastral maps, land titles, and peasant household registration, and so on. These in turn feed into the need of the central state to extend its administrative, political and military-police presence and authority into the more remote parts of its claimed territory, as well as into the need of the central state to develop its tax base. Taken altogether, these processes form part of the central state's effort, in the words of James Scott (1998), to 'simplify' and render 'legible' the otherwise numerous complex social relationships in 'non-state spaces'.

Different land reforms were passed into law, implemented, and resulted in varied and uneven outcomes between and within countries over time. Some land reforms redistributed more lands, either collectively or individually, to more peasant households than others, such as those in Cuba, China, Japan, South Korea, Kerala, Bolivia, Taiwan, Peru and Mexico on the one side, and Venezuela, Brazil, Bangladesh and Pakistan on the other side. Some of the land reforms that were able to redistribute significant quantities of land to a significant number of agricultural households actually led to substantial reduction in rural poverty, such as those in South Korea and Cuba, although other countries in the same category did not witness any significant rural poverty reduction, as in Bolivia. Moreover, the countries that carried out significant land reform and where the state provided massive direct and indirect support in the input and output markets of the rural economy, as well as in pro-poor social policies (e.g. health, education), were able to reduce rural poverty quite dramatically, as in the cases of Japan, Taiwan, China, Cuba, and Kerala. Meanwhile, the countries that had important land reforms but whose national governments failed to carry out massive and sustained support in the input and output markets for the reformed rural sectors were unable to radically reduce the level of poverty in their countryside, as in the case of Bolivia and Mexico.¹⁵

Furthermore, five issues relevant to the discussion above are to be noted. First, none of the various competing brands of and approaches to land reform had the monopoly of cases that resulted in widespread land redistribution and poverty eradication. Second, in general land reforms were carried out in many developing countries amidst the dominant 'protectionist', 'inward-looking' development strategies developed and promoted by countries in the socialist block as well as those in the capitalist world. Land reform had become an integral component of these inward-looking, protectionist policies for a variety of reasons, including the central state's aspiration to create a domestic market for its industrial sector (see, e.g. Kay, 2002; Wuyts, 1994). It is not surprising therefore that the peak period of the Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI) was also the era of land reformism in many

¹⁴ See various analyses by Raj and Tharakan (1983), Ghose (1983b), Herring (1983), Banerjee, Getler and Ghatak (2002), Harriss (1993), Baruah (1990), and Lieten (1996).

¹⁵ Important crossnational comparative studies, albeit from varying perspectives and disciplines, include de Janvry (1981), de Janvry and Sadoulet (1989), Thiesenhusen (1989, 1995), Dorner (1992), Kay (1998, 2004) for Latin America; Herring (1983) and Tai (1974) for Asia; and more generally: Ghose (1983a), Tuma (1965), Sobhan (1993), Christodoulou (1990), King (1977).

countries. The timing of land reform in the context of a country's industrialization drive can be very crucial and may have direct bearing on the probability of success in land redistribution as well as in post-land redistribution national development, as for example, in the contrasting cases of Latin America and East Asia (Kay, 2002). Third, some of these land reforms were later subjected to counter-reform where, to varying extents, previously redistributed lands, or portion of these, were returned to the previous owners and other sectors close to the new status quo. In varying circumstances and extents of reform reversal, Guatemala, Chile and Nicaragua share this similar experience. Fourth, most of the land reforms, but especially the capitalist-oriented ones, while they involved significant degree of state initiative and intervention, had also witnessed the significant roles played by non-state actors – peasant movements and their allies. These issues bring us to the question of policy and political strategies of carrying out land reform, a topic that occupies an important portion of the current discourse on land policies.

Different land reforms were implemented by state and non-state actors through different political strategies between and within countries over time. Some were implemented through varying strands of centralized authoritarian methods, such as in many East Asian land reforms (Tai, 1974), China and Peru, while others were implemented through more 'democratic' approaches, as in the cases of Kerala and West Bengal in India (Herring, 1983). While some analysts would present a dichotomy marked by 'state-led' on the one side, and 'peasant-led' on the other (see, e.g. de Janvry, Sadoulet and Wolford, 2001), it may be more useful to look at these political processes within an 'interactive state/society' perspective because resolving claims and counter-claims for property rights involves not only a peasant-state relationship, but also those within the state and between different groups in society (Borras, 2001; Herring, 1983; Fox, 1993, 2004). The interactive state/society framework seems to offer better analytic lens to explain political processes in land reform whether in single party-ruled socialist countries such as in China during the first wave of communist land reform in the early 1950s (Shillinglaw, 1974), or politically open countries with ruling communist/socialist parties that implemented land reform, as in Chile under Allende, or in West Bengal and Kerala in India (Kay and Silva, 1992; Ghose, 1983b). In these cases, land reform implementation relied on the ruling parties and the central state to implement land reform, but these political parties and the central state, in turn, relied heavily on the mobilization of the rural masses to actually implement land reform and make it work. Meanwhile, land reforms that were implemented in capitalist-oriented, open political settings, relied to a large extent on the autonomy and capacity of the central state to carry out its promise of and mandate for land reform. But the central state in turn relied mainly on the support and mobilization of the affected rural population (Barraclough, 2001). In many settings, of course, the state simply took the lead from the peasants who unilaterally occupied lands, forcing the central state to legitimize such actions, as in the case of the Bolivian land reform of 1953 (Urioste, 2001).

The 1980s Interregnum

Meanwhile, in the 1980s, land reform had had an abrupt and heavy fall from grace. It was eliminated from official development policy agendas of international institutions and nation states. While in most cases nation states did not actually pass new laws to

stop or halt land reforms, many of them decided to place existing land reform laws and policies in dormant status: land reform laws continue to exist at least officially, but no significant funds were allotted to nor administrative machineries set up or maintained for their implementation. In short, there was no 'political will' to implement the land reform law. The cases of land reform laws in Indonesia (Wiradi, 2005) and Bolivia are examples of this. It was in this historical juncture that the broadly pro-market land policy reforms would find its seeds. The subsequent paradigm shift in terms of land reform occurred due to various factors, or the convergence of such factors, as will be discussed below.

Among such factors is the debt crisis that started in the early 1980s that crippled the fiscal capabilities of national governments of most developing countries and slowed down their economic growth and development. The subsequent rise of neoliberalism and its advocacy to cutback public spending and at the same time to raise taxes largely in order to pay off debts or just to scale down if not stop borrowing altogether pushed land reform out of the official agenda of many national governments because it is a policy that required substantial state financing including regular appropriation to maintain a huge bureaucracy, while at the same time it is believed to erode some sections of pre-existing tax base.¹⁶

Second, the economic crisis of agriculture in general,¹⁷ and the land reform sector in particular, that included widespread social discontent about the 'actually existing' land reforms, both in socialist and capitalist settings, forced governments and external development agencies to introduce varying forms and degrees of adjustments. In some socialist countries as well as in capitalist settings that resorted to collectivist land reform, experiments on (state and) collective farms usually did not result in the intended gains in production and productivity levels, both for the households and for the purposes of national development campaigns. These farm collectives were also hounded by the persistent problem of rent-seeking activities by state officials and farm collective leaders. These conditions provided constant pressure for de-collectivization, which was eventually matched by the central state's eagerness to rescind on their responsibility on the (economic) performance of the reformed sector.

Third, beginning in the 1970s, technological advancement directly and indirectly related to agriculture gained more ground: more fertilizer and pesticide use, proliferation of improved seeds and high-yield varieties, farm mechanization, relative improvement in physical infrastructure in the rural areas such as road, irrigation and electrification – the Green revolution package of technology. There were optimistic celebrations about the prospects of eradicating rural poverty and hunger via technological innovation. While in some instances, both in policy discourse and in actual practice, technological advancement and land reform were not seen to contradict each other, the rise in significance of technological advancement in the input and output markets of agriculture gave additional incentive for modernizing,

¹⁶ The general analytic insights found in Gwynne and Kay (2004) offer relevant views that put this issue in a better historical and broader context. Refer also to Spoor (1997).

¹⁷ For a critical reflection on the performance of agriculture during the much-maligned period prior to neoliberalism, refer to Spoor (2002) for a specific study of the Latin American experience.

entrepreneurially minded landlords to resist land reform, and provided governments less politically contentious policy alternatives toward rural poverty reduction.¹⁸

Fourth, in the 1980s, especially toward the later part of that decade, most communist- and socialist-inspired national liberation movements had been waning, with others completely dissipated, for various internal and external reasons. The conflagration of unrest manifested in peasant land occupations that marked much of the rural world in the 1950s through the 1970s was not immediately visible during this decade. From a distance, there was relative silence and calm. Of course one reason for this was the demobilization of previously militant mass of peasants after they received lands from the state land reform programs during the preceding decade or two. The relative absence of visible forms of significant peasant unrest and militancy in the rural areas during this decade helped encourage national governments to place land reforms in their dormant status if not completely taken out of the official agenda.

Finally, the end of the Cold War towards the later part of the 1980s signaled some form of closure of the ideological rivalry between socialist versus capitalist paths to development. There was a general perception that there was no more immediate communist and socialist threat to the capitalist world, and so, there was no more urgent need for ‘Ladejinskys’ to crisscross the world to promote pre-emptive land reforms. In the 1980s, restructuring of property rights and farm work incentive structure in state and collective farms were slowly introduced in countries that would later be labeled collectively as ‘transitional economies’. These reforms have been broadly market-oriented, giving the individuals and households more flexibility in some bundles of landed property rights and providing them greater control over their farm surplus and on how to dispose them. But it would only be in the 1990s, after the decisive collapse of the actually existing socialism in Eastern Europe, that such market-oriented reforms would gain enormous ground (see, e.g. Akram Lodhi, 2005; Spoor, 2003; Deere, 2000).

These six factors, separately and jointly, have adversely impacted on land reform, resulting in the latter’s decisive exclusion from the official development agendas. This policy elimination had been carried out with relative ease because of the ‘checkered’ record of land reform, especially in terms of its declared goal on poverty eradication – and, arguably, because those that wanted land reform out of the official development policy agenda were successful in waging hegemonic policy discourse, projecting land reform as a ‘failure’ especially in terms of eradicating poverty in the countryside (see Borras, 2003b).

The Resurrection and ‘Metamorphosis’ of Land Reform in the 1990s Onwards

In the 1990s, however, land reform was resurrected in the development policy agendas of international development institutions as well as in many nation states. It was a confluence of events and convergence of factors that put land back in the development policy agendas.

¹⁸ For insightful analysis of the changing political-economy of global food regimes, the invention and proliferation of the Green Revolution ideology and how, in different ways and to varying extents, these impacted on the land question in most developing countries during this period, refer to Lappé, Collins and Rosset (1998), Friedmann (2005), Boyce (1993), and Ross (1998).

First, around the mid-1990s, pockets of dramatic land-based political conflicts caught the attention of the world. Three of these were most important, namely, the Chiapas uprising in southern Mexico, the state-instigated land invasions by black landless poor of white commercial farms in Zimbabwe, and the resurgence of militant peasant land occupations in Brazil reminiscent of the actions by the peasant leagues of the 1950s but much greater in scale and political sophistication (Harvey, 1998; Moyo, 2000; Moyo and Yeros, 2005; Ghimire, 2005; Petras, 1998, 1997; Veltmeyer, 2005, 1997; Wright and Wolford, 2003; Meszaros, 2000; Bradford and Rocha, 2002). National governments were compelled to address these boiling social pressures 'from below', while the international development community grappled with the meanings and implications of such complex conflicts, resulting in the convergence of international and national efforts to address these land-based grievances. But these resurgent peasant mobilizations occurred also in many other places, such as in the Philippines, Honduras, Bolivia, South Africa and Indonesia, although these did not get the same scale and extent of inter(national) media attention than the three cases cited above.¹⁹ Altogether, these phenomena validate what Ronald Herring (2003) observed, that land reform was taken out of the 'policy agendas' of national governments and international agencies, but it never left the 'political agendas' of peasants and their organizations. Herring explained that even 'dead land reforms are not dead; they become nodes around which future peasant mobilizations emerge because promises unkept keep movements alive.' It is also important to note that these peasant actions have been broadened in many parts of the world by mobilizations for land and democratic rights by indigenous peoples, such as those in Bolivia and Ecuador (see, e.g. Yashar, 1999, 2005; Korovkin, 2000) and by peasant women (see, e.g. Razavi, 2003), as well as by the urban poor in countries like Brazil and South Africa. These changed contexts and sets of actors have also transformed the perceptions about land reform and rural livelihoods (Gwynne and Kay, 2004), facilitating the emergence of (new) sets of policy agendas, such as renewed efforts in land titling and cadastral records that would subsequently attract greater development policy and academic interests (Zoomers and van der Haar, 2000; Kay, 1998).

Second, in some countries ravaged by political conflict, negotiated settlements or regime transitions occurred, where the question of solving poverty and social exclusion was made part of the peace-building processes or democratic (re)constructions, especially those in the countryside.²⁰ Hence, for example, land reform was resurrected in the official agenda of the El Salvadorean government as part of its post-conflict peace-building process (Foley, 1997; Pearce, 1998; Diskin, 1989). The same was attempted a few years back in Colombia, although without much success in terms of sustaining it in the official agenda (Ross, 2003). Moreover, it was within post-authoritarian regime transition context that land reforms were resurrected in the official policy agendas in the mid-1980s in Brazil and the Philippines (see Fox, 1990; Houtzager, 2000; Franco, 2001; Riedinger, 1995). It was

¹⁹ Refer for example to Franco and Borras (2005), Urioste (2001), Greenberg (2004), and Lucas and Warren (2003), respectively.

²⁰ See also Pons-Vignon and Lecomte (2004). It is also within this broad context that we should understand the renewed calls for land reform during the many regime transitions when, for various reasons, centralized authoritarian regimes in many developing countries collapsed and political processes for greater (rural) democratization gained some ground (see, e.g. the edited volume on rural democratization by Fox, 1990).

also in the same context that the land reform agenda took prominence in the post-apartheid South Africa, where, alongside the adopted policies of land distribution and leasehold reform, the policy of land restitution was officially inaugurated.²¹ It is also in this similar context that the heated land policy debate erupted in post-dictatorship Indonesia (Lucas and Warren, 2003; Aspinal, 2004).

Third, beginning in the early 1990s, when several countries abandoned socialism, they were confronted by the difficult question of what to do with the huge state and collective farms. The challenge of sensible transition in these farms has put the question of landed property rights among the top policy agendas of concerned national governments and international development institutions (see Deininger, 1995, 2002; Spoor, 2003; Spoor and Visser, 2004). Also, other socialist countries, as mentioned earlier, started to adjust the incentive structure in their agricultural sector, ushering in a new era of varying forms and bundles of land-based property rights and market exchange in several socialist countries (see, e.g., Akram Lodhi, 2004, 2005; Kerkvliet, 2005, 1994, for Vietnam).

Finally, the rise of neoliberalism and its aspiration to achieve a complete ideological hegemony in all aspects of development question and initiative has brought the issue of land under a new – but different – spotlight. The problems with the earlier neoliberal policy prescriptions became more apparent in the late 1980s, particularly the inherent limits and flaws of income-centred and growth-oriented approaches to poverty eradication and development. The persistent poverty and growing inequality have put into question the neoliberal paradigm. The emergence of this problem forced mainstream economists to introduce adjustments to their development policy model. It is in this context where the issue of poor people's access to productive assets, including land, was (re)introduced. The assumption is that poor people are poor because they do not have access to productive resources. Closely linked to this is the popularization of the notion of 'insecurity' in the context of rural livelihoods and economic investments in the countryside. The consensus among mainstream economists was that many rural poor people have insecure access to land resources, leading to their unstable livelihoods and low level of investments. The imperative of developing formal private and individualized landed property rights through land titling programs in public lands, as well as land sales and rental arrangements in private lands have thus become more urgent and necessary. It has been popularly assumed that these property rights-related campaigns will not only make poor people's access to land secure, but it will also make financial investments in the rural economy more attractive (see Deininger and Binswanger, 1999; World Bank, 2003, 2005). Furthermore, the interest on land and on the institutional regulations about its ownership, control and use is also linked to the efforts of transnational corporate sector, especially those engaged in agro-food business and timber sector, to expand their production (and trade) hegemony in developing countries and transition economies (see Friedmann, 2005; Goodman and Watts, 1997; McMichael, 1995; Magdoff, Buttel, and Foster, 1998; Lappé, Collins and Rosset, 1998; van den Hombergh, 2004). And so, land was rushed back onto the development policy agendas of mainstream international development institutions, and then re-channeled widely to national government agencies, and even to NGOs.

²¹ For critical analyses, see Levin and Weiner (1997), Bernstein (1998), Lahiff (2003), and Cousins (1997).

Altogether, the four factors and events have put land back onto the official development policy discourses and agendas. However, the content and context of the policy revival are significantly different from those of the past land reform policy initiatives. The terms of the current policy discourse on land is dominated by the broadly pro-market mainstream economists. The previous, ideologically grounded debates around ‘capitalist- versus socialist-oriented’, ‘individualist versus collectivist’ land reforms were now supplanted by the new discourses propagated by those who rejected the conventional notion of expropriationary land reform. And so we are currently confronted by debate formulations such as: ‘state- versus market-led’, ‘coercive versus voluntary’, ‘centralized versus decentralized’, or ‘top-down/supply-driven versus bottom-up/demand-driven’ land reforms (see Borrás, 2003a, 2003b).²² Instead of uncritically accepting these presented dichotomies, we take such constructions as problematic.

Moreover, among the ongoing land reforms diversity in approach is apparent: from ‘state-instigated’ as in Zimbabwe (Palmer, 2000b; Moyo, 2000; Worby 2001), to ‘peasant-led’ as in Brazil (Wright and Wolford, 2003; Wolford, 2003; Rosset, 2001; Petras, 1998), to ‘state/society-driven’ as in the Philippines (Borrás, 2001; Franco, 2005), to ‘market-led’, as in some pilot programs in Colombia, Brazil, South Africa and the Philippines (Deininger, 1999). It is thus important to examine from a comparative perspective the ongoing land reforms in different parts of the world, highlighting both their similarities and differences; this research undertaking aspires to contribute toward this effort by drawing lessons from the discussion of the ten country cases.

In short, past land reforms despite their diversity in ideological provenance and orientation, had been united on several common economic and socio-political themes. Nevertheless, past land reform discourse and practice also missed, to a significant degree, a number of issues now considered as crucial to the success or failure of land reform itself, and of any broad-based sustainable development more generally. The way different development issues, broadly categorized as economic and socio-political, have become important contexts for and objects of land reforms, has been altered over time, as shown in Table 1. If we take a simplified periodization of pre-1980s and post-1990s land reforms (with the 1980s as an ‘interregnum’), then we would see that many old issues have remained relevant and important up to this time, while others have in varying degrees waned in importance or even disappeared. Still, many development issues that are not critical in the past have emerged to be important issues at present, and certainly, in the future, as in the cases of gender, indigenous peoples, violence, and the environment. While land reforms were admittedly treated as integral component of broad development strategies whose strategic aims eventually included eradicating poverty, in general the relationship between land reform and poverty reduction were more theoretically assumed than empirically demonstrated.

²² It is broadly within this context that decentralized approaches to natural resources management have become very important in development policy discourse – for critical studies, refer to Ribot and Larson (2005).

Table 1: Changes in the Economic and Socio-Political Bases of, and Imperatives for, Land Reforms

Pre-1980s Period	1990s Onward
Economic	
Existing large landed estates are economically inefficient; must be re-structured via land reform	Continuing relevance/currency
Creation of privatized & individualized landed property rights to boost investments in rural economy	Continuing – and has seen greater expansion in coverage
	Issues related to inefficiency (& accountability) in (former) socialist state farms & cooperatives, e.g. Eastern Europe, central Asia, Vietnam, China
	Issues related to efficiency in farm collectives brought about by past land reforms, e.g. Mexico & Peru
Socio-Political	
De-colonization	While to a large extent it is not a burning issue with the same intensity as decades ago, decolonization process-related issues have persisted in many countries, such as Zimbabwe
Cold War	Not anymore
Central state's 'management' of rural unrest usually instigated by liberation movements for revolutionary societal/state transformation	Diminished substantially as liberation movements waned. But rural unrest persisted usually not in the context of armed groups wanting to seize state power but to push for radical reforms, e.g. Chiapas, Brazil
As a strategy to legitimize and/or consolidate one elite faction's hold on to state power against another, e.g. Left electoral victories, military coup d' etat.	Continuing, e.g. Zimbabwe, tenancy reform by the Left Front in West Bengal
As an integral component of the central state's of 'modernization', i.e. standardized cadastral maps, etc. for taxation purposes, etc.	Continuing, and has seen unprecedented degree of technological sophistication (e.g. satellite/digital mapping, computerized data-banking)
	i) Post-conflict democratic construction and consolidation, e.g. post-apartheid South Africa, post-civil war El Salvador (Pearce, 1998; Foley, 1997), Colombia (Ross, 2003)
	ii) Advancement of knowledge about the distinct rights of indigenous peoples (e.g. Yashar, 1999, 2005; Korovkin, 2000)
	iii) Advancement of knowledge about gender-land rights issues, see, e.g. Razavi (2003); Agarwal (1994), Kabeer (1995); Deere (1985), and Deere and León (2001)
	iv) Greater concern about the environment (see, e.g. Herring, 2002)
	v) Persistence and resurgence of violence related to drugs and ethnic issues (see, e.g. Pons-Vignon and Lecomte, 2004)
	vi) Emerging '[human] rights-based approaches' to development
	vii) The phenomenal rise of NGOs as important actor in development question at the local, national and international levels

When land reform was resurrected in development policy discourse beginning in the 1990s, it has undergone a metamorphosis, at least as far as the dominant groups in the academic and policy practitioner's circles are concerned. The neoliberal paradigm on land policies is the dominant current in today's development policy discourse and practice. These land policies have been conceptualized and promoted

within a changed global, national and local context. Development strategies changed from ‘protectionist and inward-looking perspective’, to ‘free trade and outward-looking orientation’, or from state-directed to market-oriented. The land policies that have emerged in the 1990s, and the various meanings and purposes accorded to these by different competing groups, should be seen as integral component of these processes of global neoliberal reforms.²³

These land policies have been theorized for and carried out in four broad types of settings. First, ‘public and/or communal’ lands are chief targets for privatization. Mainstream economic policies are arguing and advocating for the systematic privatization and individualization of property rights in public/communal lands in order to transform these land resources into active capital. Thus, renewed interest and initiatives at land titling, registration and (decentralized land) administration have seen unprecedented level and extent.²⁴ The current efforts are different from past initiatives on at least two counts: i) the scale in terms of spaces being covered, or are being aspired to be covered, is enormous and unprecedented, and ii) the degree of technical sophistication in terms of (satellite/digital) mapping and (computerized) data-banking has been unparalleled in human history. Moreover, while the mainstream policies at times recognize the relevance of pre-existing communal forms of property ownership, they nevertheless advocate for individualized property rights within these blocks of common landed properties, e.g. individual plots where the right to use can be freely traded (World Bank, 2003). This policy, aimed at homogenizing property rights regimes across diverse national and subnational settings, is currently being implemented through various policies and projects, with varied outcomes.²⁵

Second, state and collective farms, both in capitalist settings and in ‘transitional economies,’ are also important targets for farm privatization and parcelization. Mainstream economists believe that collective farms established in settings where significant capitalist-oriented land reforms were implemented in the past had produced institutions that have hampered, not promoted, incentives for individuals to become economically efficient and competitive farmers, and have impeded the emergence of more fluid land market. Thus, they have advocated for the privatization and individualization of property rights in these farms, as key incentive for farms to produce more and to produce efficiently. This is the case, for example, in Mexico and Peru. Moreover, and for broadly similar reasons, the policy of privatization and individualization of state collective farms in transitional economies were also advocated and (unevenly) carried out in different countries (Deininger, 1995; Spoor, 2003). The initial outcomes are varied between countries: it does not seem to have the intended outcome of vibrant land markets in the reformed (privatized-parcelized) *ejidos* in Mexico (Nuijten, 2003) for example, although it

²³ See, for example, the argument advanced by Fortin (2005) in the specific context of Sub-Saharan Africa, and Bush (2002) in the context of Egypt.

²⁴ The mainstream arguments for such renewed efforts on land titling, registration and related policies are captured quite clearly by Bryant (1996); see also de Soto (2000).

²⁵ For preliminary critical studies in the context of Africa, see Toulmin and Quan (2000), Platteau (1996), Quan (2000), Palmer (2000a), Berry (2002), McAuslan (2000), Matondi and Moyo (2003); for Latin America, see Jansen and Roquas (1998), Hernaiz, Pacheco, Guerrero and Miranda (2000), and Zoomers and van der Haar (2000); for a view from Asia, see Borrás (forthcoming, 2006).

seems to have resulted in increased production and productivity levels, albeit amidst increasing inequality, in Vietnam (Akram Lodhi, 2005).²⁶

The first two policies discussed so far are directed towards non-private lands – in order to create private, individualized landed property rights. The discussion that follows will be on the two policies that are directed towards private lands.

Third, private productive farms are to be reformed only under certain conditions and within a specific economic orientation. For mainstream economists and development policy experts one of the reasons of low production and productivity level in the rural economies is because of the persistence of ‘distortions’ in the land market where inefficient producers continue to own and control lands while the more efficient ones (and those that have potential to become efficient producers) could not access land (World Bank, 2003). These distortions, according to the mainstream view, are caused by various factors including many land reform-related laws that limit the land rental and sales transactions in the market. For the mainstream view, the principal policy for this type of setting is the promotion of non-coercive sharecropping tenancy reform, through leasehold arrangement. This policy is believed to be more sensible and practical towards achieving the most economically efficient land resource use and allocation, and it does not entail any major state fiscal requirement. It will also contribute to the development of vibrant land market. Sadoulet, Murgai and de Janvry (2001: 196-97) explain that land markets “have welfare effects, even though rental is not a transfer of wealth.” They contend that this is because “in the long-run, access to land via tenancy may help the landless capitalize the returns to otherwise idle assets [e.g. family labor], accumulate wealth, and move up an ‘agricultural ladder’ toward land ownership.” Klaus Deininger of the World Bank’s land policy unit supports this assumption and argues that only in settings where rental arrangement is not feasible should land reform through land sales be considered (1999: 666). For the mainstream view, this policy should be carried out simultaneously with other related policies including those that lift the ‘ceiling’ on land ownership and ban on land rental and sales, as well as the legal prohibitions on share tenancy practices (World Bank, 2003; see also Baranyi, Deere and Morales, 2004: 33).

Fourth, same as the third – it pertains to private farms, but with different policy treatment. The mainstream view still believes that large farms that are inefficient should be redistributed to tenant-farmers and farmworkers, so that small family farms that are believed to be more economically efficient can be created. But the approach in carrying out this reform is quite different from the conventional framework. This policy aims to substitute the conventional coercive land reform with a voluntary policy. As mentioned above, the favoured policy toward private farms is the promotion of share tenancy arrangement; only in circumstances where there are ‘willing sellers’ and ‘willing buyers’ of land should land sales be allowed. The features of this pro-market ‘land reform’ are, according to its advocates, the opposite of the features of conventional land reforms: voluntary not coercive, demand-driven

²⁶ Among contemporary scholars who have carried out empirical studies and theorizing on land markets within an economic perspective, perhaps Michael Carter is among the few who have offered sophisticated analysis based on his examination of Latin American cases (see, e.g. 2000; Carter and Salgado, 2001; Carter and Mesbah, 1993). Refer also to the various studies in Zoomers and van der Haar (2000).

not supply-driven, private not state land transactions, decentralized not centralized, top-down/centralized versus bottom-up/decentralized, and so on. This policy, popularly known as Market-Led Agrarian Reform (MLAR), is a scheme whereby landlords are paid 100 percent spot-cash for 100 percent market value of the land, where the cost of the land transfer is shouldered fully by the buyer; landlords unwilling to part with their estates will not be coerced to sell their lands (Deininger and Binswanger, 1999; World Bank, 2003; 2005: 156-175; but see Borras, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Navarro, 1998).

In varying policy adaptations and scales, this policy model has been implemented in several countries, such as Brazil, Colombia, South Africa and the Philippines. Its initial outcomes, or the meanings of these outcomes especially in terms of reducing poverty and social exclusion in the countryside, are interpreted differently by different scholars and policy practitioners. For the optimistic claims, see Buainain et al (1999), Deininger (1999), Deininger and Binswanger (1999); and for critical insights, see Barros, Sauer and Schwartzman (2003), Sauer (2003), Levin and Weiner (1997), Lahiff (2003), Lebert (2001), El-Ghonemy (2001), Riedinger, Yang, and Brook (2001), Reyes (1999), and Borras (2003a, 2003b, 2005).²⁷ This policy has been actively opposed by several rural-oriented civil society groups, coordinated internationally by *La Via Campesina*, the Foodfirst Information and Action Network or FIAN, and the Land Research and Action Network or LRAN (see Baranyi, Deere and Morales, 2004; Borras, 2004).

In short, policies in the four broad types of settings are based upon the use of markets as a principal means of reallocating land resources under formal property rights that are 'secure' so as to entice capital inflow into the rural economy. The World Bank calls these policies collectively as 'pro-poor land policies'. The initial outcomes of these land policies in various countries have been comprehensively reviewed by the World Bank in its August 2003 Policy Research Report *Land Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction*. This Report is now an important document in the formulation of land policies in many developing and transitional economies, as well as having a major influence on debates around such policies. In fact, the European Union Council of Ministers approved in November 2004 its own similar, but not the same, version of a blueprint of land policy guidelines for its overseas development assistance,²⁸ and so have all other major multilateral and bilateral development agencies. The framework of this World Bank report has been reiterated in the *World Development Report 2006* (see Chapter 8).

Common Themes and Competing Perspectives

The economic and socio-political imperatives for, bases and impact of, land reforms are the common themes to all country case studies in this multidisciplinary research project. These themes are examined not separately from each other, but in relational way. In this research undertaking, land and landed property rights are treated not

²⁷ For a relevant critical insights based on the experience of southern Mexico, refer to Bobrow-Strain (2004). Refer also to the critical insights offered by Paasch (2003) and the joint critique put forward by *La Via Campesina* and the Foodfirst Information and Action Network or FIAN (FIAN-Via Campesina, 2003).

²⁸ For critical reflections on the European Union (draft) land policy, see Monsalve (2004).

merely as factor of economic production, but as a resource that has social, cultural and political dimensions. Understanding the relationships between these different dimensions of land and the policies around these necessarily requires a closer examination of the roles of the ‘free’ market, state, and civil society – and how they shape one another towards a ‘pro-poor’ (re)allocation of land resources. Each country case study in this land policy series is analyzed from within this framework.

Viewed from this perspective, the contemporary debate about agrarian reform is marked by four broadly distinct and competing views about land reform – as summarized in Table 2.²⁹ The fault-lines between these four are the differences on what types of land reform and which strategies to employ in order to achieve their objectives, especially on reducing poverty and social exclusion in the countryside. It must be noted that these are ideal types. They are useful as analytical typology, but the reality does not always neatly fit with each type. This typology, in turn, serves as general analytic signposts for the country studies in this land policy paper series.

The first common theme is the role of ‘free’ markets in the (re)allocation of land resources between different social classes and groups in society as well as sectors in the national economy. All the papers in this research project examine whether and how and to what extent the forces of the ‘free’ market have (re)distributed access to and control over land resources that favour the rural poor. All the essays critically examine the empirical materials from the various countries that have been studied against the backdrop of an existing mainstream assumption about the superiority of the forces of the ‘free’ market in land resource (re)distribution. As partly explained in the country case studies in this research project such as the Uzbekistan, Vietnamese and Armenian cases, this perspective is the one that views land reform as a policy that can and should facilitate the provision of privatized and individualized property rights to as many people in as much spaces as possible – through *market-led* and *market-oriented* mechanisms of transferring property rights and of governing land markets. This is represented by mainstream economists and, to a large extent, by development policy experts. This perspective does not altogether rule out the role of the state, but that role is being modified, from being key to a facilitative one, and assigned with the tasks of: providing the necessary legal institutional frameworks for these market mechanisms to emerge and operate, providing information accessible to ‘stakeholders’ to create a ‘level playing field’, and promoting transparency and accountability. The state, especially its local government units, is also required to promote and enter into ‘partnerships’ with the civil society and private sectors. Deininger (1999) and World Bank (2003) represent this view.

The second common theme is the role of the state in the ‘pro-poor’ (re)allocation of land resources. All papers in this research undertaking examine how and to what extent central states played a role in the (re)distribution of land resources between different social classes and groups in society and between the different sectors of the economy. All the papers in this research project critically examine the state and its role in pro-poor land policies partly in dialogue with an existing school of thought in the agrarian reform literature that identifies the central state as the leading actor in any pro-poor redistributive reform policies such as land reform. This

²⁹ For a Latin American view, see Veltmeyer (2005) for a similar, but not the same, typology involving the first three types discussed in this section.

perspective follows the conventional framework which views land reform as a policy that should provide secure access to and control over land resources to the landless and nearlandless rural poor – through a *state-led* mechanism to expropriate land from big landlords and to redistribute them to peasants. As partly explained in the country cases in this study, such as the Ethiopian, Zimbabwean and the Philippine cases, a state-led strategy is quite diverse, (historically) ranging from authoritarian to ‘democratic’ approaches (see, e.g. Tai, 1974; Riedinger, 1995). While this perspective follows, in many cases, the economic basis of the market-led view, it also strongly places the question of land reform in the context of social justice, explicitly calling for the reform of inefficient, unjust and exploitative pre-existing agrarian structure. Founded on the belief that market by itself will not redistribute, but rather may even further concentration of wealth and power in society, this view calls for the central state to muster strong ‘political will’ and mobilize significant funds to finance large scale land reform. Tai (1974) represents this view, while the recent re-assertion made by Barraclough (2001) can also be identified with this perspective.

The third common theme examined in this study is the role of peasant movements and mobilizations for land. All the country case studies in this land policy paper series analyze the role played by peasants’ actions, albeit the degree and extent of analytic treatment varies from one country study to another, depending on the prevailing conditions in these countries. For example, this theme receives greater attention in Brazil and the Philippines, as compared to Armenia and Uzbekistan. However, all the essays acknowledge the importance of peasants’ actions in land policymaking and implementation, and have to address an existing distinct view in the agrarian reform literature that assigns key role to peasants’ actions to any pro-poor land policymaking and implementation. The perspective sees land reform in ways very much similar to that of the state-led perspective, i.e. to provide secure access to and control over land resources to landless and nearlandless poor in the context of social justice and with the explicit goal of reforming the inefficient, unjust and exploitative agrarian structure – but through *peasant-led* approach. Following the state-led view that market by itself will not redistributive wealth and power, this approach however is founded on the belief that the state by itself cannot also be relied upon to carry out reform because usually it is captive to the dominant classes and groups in society that are also opposed to redistributive reforms like land reform. The peasant-led approach is exemplified by the ideological and political discourse by the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST, Landless Rural Workers’ Movement) in Brazil in particular, and *La Via Campesina* more generally,³⁰ and scholars closely sympathetic to this view, such as James Petras (1997, 1998) and Henry Veltmeyer (1997, 2005).³¹

³⁰ For an analysis of the issue of agrarian reform focusing on *La Via Campesina*, see Borras (2004).

³¹ For excellent background on *Via Campesina*’s history, politics and ideology, see Desmarais (forthcoming) and Edelman (2003).

Refer also the de Janvry, Sadoulet and Wolford (2001) for their analysis of the Brazilian landless movement.

Table 2: Key features of various contending perspectives in agrarian reform

Perspective	Features
Market-led	Main consideration is economic efficiency/productivity gains; gives secondary/marginal role to central states; peasants/beneficiaries who are supposed to be in the ‘driver’s seat’ of the reform are actually subordinated to the dominant market actors; in reality, ‘market-led’ means ‘landlord/merchant/TNC-led’ in many agrarian settings today.
State-led	Main consideration is usually related to securing/maintaining political legitimacy, though developmental agendas are also important; ‘strong political will’ necessary to carry out land reform agenda; usually treats peasants/beneficiaries as necessary administrative adjuncts; subordinates market actors, or selectively deals with market actors depending on which actors are more influential within the state.
Peasant-led	Main assumption is that ‘state is too captive to societal elite interests’, while market forces are basically dominated by elite interests = thus, the only way to achieve pro-poor agrarian reform is for peasants and their organizations by themselves to take the initiative to implement agrarian reform.
State/Society-driven	Main assumptions: it does not romanticize the ‘omnipotence’ of peasants/beneficiaries and their organizations; it does not assign commanding role to central state; it does not provide sole importance to economic productivity-enhancement issues = although it recognizes the relevance of each of these perspectives; analyzes state, peasant movements, and market forces not as separate groups, but as actors inherently linked to each other by their association to the politics and economics of land resources. It has three key features: ‘ <i>peasants/beneficiaries-led</i> ’, ‘ <i>state-supported</i> ’, and ‘ <i>economic productivity-enhancing</i> ’.

The fourth common theme addressed by all papers in this study is the *interaction* between state and society. As mentioned earlier, while it is important to analyze the separate, distinct roles of the ‘free’ market, state and peasant movements, it is equally crucial to examine them as inherently interlinked actors – focusing on the interaction between them. All the country case studies in this research project examine this theme within the perspective of *state/society-driven* land policymaking and implementation process that views an ‘interactive’ state-society relationship that largely determines the character, content, pace and direction of land reform policy (Fox, 1993, 2004). This view also advocates for secure access to and control over land resources by the landless and nearlandless rural poor within a social justice framework. It has three key features: ‘*peasants/beneficiaries-led*’, ‘*state-supported*’, and ‘*economic productivity-enhancing*’. While it highlights the importance of political mobilizations ‘from below,’ it also puts equal weight to the reformist initiatives by state actors ‘from above.’ It is founded on the belief that let alone, markets will not only not lead to pro-poor redistributive reforms, it is even likely to further inequality and poverty. Nevertheless, it does not altogether dismiss the positive role of the market, although the latter needs to be governed by the state (see Wade, 2004, 1990). Herring (1983), Borras (2001) and Franco (2005) represent this view.

The treatment to these different themes and the subsequent competing perspectives as to their role in agrarian reform and rural development has evolved

amidst changing contexts for, and contested meanings of,³² land reform (as summarized in Table 1). Assessing the outcomes of the diverse types of land policies initiated in the 1990s onwards in terms of redistributing land to landless and nearlandless peasants and in reducing rural poverty via different approaches is as difficult a task as assessing past land reforms. Again, the record of contemporary land reforms is varied and uneven between and within countries, as will be shown and explained in the various essays in this research project. A crossnational comparative analysis of these processes and outcomes, and their implications to agrarian reform policymaking in particular and to the study of agrarian change more generally will be explored in the concluding essay of this land policy paper series.

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³² See, for example, the discussion by Borras and Franco (2005) about the contested meanings of 'land reform' in the context of highly productive, capital-intensive, agribusiness plantations.

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