Breaking the Commons Dilemma in Community-Based Forest Management in Central Luzon, Philippines: An Autoethnography

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Your corn is ripe today; mine will be so tomorrow. 'Tis profitable for us both, that I should labour with you today, and that you should aid me tomorrow. I have no kindness for you, and know you have as little for me. I will not, therefore, take any pains upon your account; and should I labour with you upon my own account, in expectation of a return, I know I should be disappointed, and that I should in vain depend upon your gratitude. Here then I leave you to labour alone; You treat me in the same manner. The seasons change; and both of us lose our harvests for want of mutual confidence and security.

—David Hume

Introduction

Prior to the institutionalization of the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) program in the Philippines in 1995, the country's forests were managed with substantial state control and with tenurial contracts that did not result in the sustainability of Philippine uplands *(Bello, et.al, 1982, Vitug,1993; Pulhin, 1996)* . The contracts were granted either to migratory private businesses that did not have stake in the forests beyond the contract terms nor interest other than

financial gains; or to individuals and groups who were insecure with short-term land tenure. The outcomes were the progressive depletion of forest resources and the series of tragedies caused by soil erosion and massive flooding, marginalization of traditional groups dependent on the forest for their livelihood and breakdown of cultural practices that sustained forest ecosystem for centuries.

In the country, forest cover has fallen from 70 percent in mid-1800 to only 24 percent today (*DENR-BFD, 2006*).

During the program's introduction, CBFM was considered by the DENR and concerned environmentalists to be the hope in saving Philippine forests.

I inquired on whether, and how, the CBFM approach—particularly the collective mode of management—works in the Philippines.

This paper is based on an action research in a CBFM-implementing people's organization (PO) where I was a member for almost two years already by the time I started my doctoral studies. I made the action research as the field basis of my dissertation in Philippine Studies in the University of the Philippines. I documented that study in an autoethnographic form.

From the action research, I saw a Philippine tenurial model that I believe would be an improvement on the communal management mode of the CBFM and hopefully lead to sustainability in our forests.

THEORETICAL ANALYTICS

The theoretical analytics of the study comes from the individualism vs. collectivism debate. In forest management, the debate was started by Garret Hardin *(1968)* in his Theory of the Tragedy of the Commons, supported by the advocates of privatization using game theoretic arguments such as A. W. Tucker's prisoner's dilemma and Mancur Olson's (*1965*) logic of collective action, and opposed by advocates of collective action (*Ostrom, 1990*), public choice *(Gintis, 1995)* and gift economy systems (*Mauss, 1925; Bollier, 2002*). In brief, Hardin *(1968)* theorized that a common open for anybody's use is bound to a disastrous or tragic end

because of the perceived absence of personal stakes in the long-term sustainability of the resource. Advocates of collective action oppose this theory based on institutional and cultural factors that may operate in a common.

In recognition of common property resources (CPR) that have worked in many parts of the world, and in mistaking open-access for CPR, Hardin took steps to rectify his oversight in 1994. In a more recent work, he distinguished between the unmanaged (unowned) commons subject to tragedy and the managed (owned) commons where property rights may be able to prevent misuse of the resource. *(Hardin, 1994)*. The managed (owned) commons is a common-property resource.

Despite the rectification, the Tragedy has been used by many economists who distrust the basis of collective action, and conversely in full belief of the theory of individual utility-maximizing behavior. In his critique of the over-subscription of "conservatives and economists" to the Tragedy metaphor, Boliler says that "..it (the metaphor) began to be an all-purpose metaphor to denigrate collectively-managed property and champion the efficiencies of private property regimes."

THE CBFM PROGRAM

The CBFMP as defined by the DENR refers to the strategy of protection, rehabilitation, development and management of forestlands in the Philippines by the community of stakeholders. The program was introduced by Executive Order 263 in 1995 by the Ramos Adminsitration. Under the program, organized local communities and indigenous peoples may apply for a CBFM Agreement for stewardship of contiguous areas in the uplands for a period of twenty-five years renewable for another twenty-five years. Applicant-communities referred to peoples' organizations with legal standing around the prospective area.

The CBFM program absorbed the earlier community forestry programs— namely the Integrated Social Forestry Program (ISFP) introduced by the Marcos Administration and all other people-oriented

programs introduced thereafter by the succeeding administration—some of which, as model sites, enjoyed substantial financial and technical assistance from the government.

The CBFM Strategy

The CBFM is the chosen national strategy to attain "sustainable forestry and social justice." *(CBFM Office-DENR, 1989).* It seeks to help forest-dependent communities of indigenous peoples and migrant groups "to peaceably occupy, manage, and reap the benefits from their forest lands in a responsible and sustainable manner." The CBFM strategy was considered by the DENR "to represent a paradigm shift in forest management because it veers away from the regulatory mode of forest preservation and protection to a service-oriented one." As such it allows local communities to benefit from the existing resources of the forest for as long as they adopt a framework of community resource management "that permits a balance between providing for the needs of the members of the community on the one hand and forest protection, rehabilitation and development on the other".

The framework of resource management is to be reflected by the beneficiary PO in the Community Resource Management Framework (CRMF)—a document to be submitted to the DENR within one year after the award of the CBFM Agreement. Supposedly, this document shall be formulated by the PO with the assistance of the DENR, local government units (LGU), and/or private entities.

CENTRAL LUZON: THE STUDY SITE

My study site is in San Felipe, Zambales, in a peripheral area of a former US military base in the province of Zambales in Central Luzon. The province was inhabited originally by the Aytas—of dark and short African stock—and the Sambals. In Zambales, these ethnic groups were later followed by the Ilocanos, the largest ethnic group in the province, the Tagalogs, Bicolanos and Visayans.

Central Luzon, located in the central part of Luzon island as its name suggests, experienced various socio-political, economic, cultural and natural transformation over the last century. The period saw the birth and development of the Hukbalahap and Communist Party of the Philippines, the establishment and dislodgment of the American military bases in Clark, Pampanga and Subic, Zambales, the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, and in 2004, the most serious flooding in the province of Aurora, a newly added province located at the foot of the central portion of Sierra Madre, one of UNESCO's world environmental heritage sites. The upgrading of former transport facilities of the former military bases commencing upon the onset of the writing of this study is expected to accelerate the urbanization process in the region particularly Subic and Clark. The expressway that will link the Subic International Seaport and Clark International Airport is likewise expected to create growth centers and a logistics hub called the Global Gateways.

The site of my CBFM community—Mt. Carampoan in Barangay Feria, San Felipe, Zambales—is 31 kilometers away from Subic Base Metropolitan Authortiy (SBMA) if one traverses the national road. It was one of the areas most directly hit by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991. In 1998, the year that the CBFM Agreement was awarded to our cooperative which we named the Cabaruan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CMPC), the whole town was still being flooded with lahar—muddy emissions from Mt. Pinatubo—and the many houses that were ravaged by tons of ashes were still in ramschackle. The farms were unutilized due the acidic ashes that covered the fields. The uplands were visibly denuded.

Today, the protection, development and rehabilitation of the region's forests is a key concern in regional planning in the light of future needs of the urban centers and the countryside for water supply for various uses, for food and non-food resources from the forests, and for clean air and abatement of the increase of greenhouse gases.

In Central Luzon there are 120 CBFM projects.

TABLE 1. Community-Based Forest Management Projects in Central Luzon

Province	No. of Projects*	Area	Participating Households
Aurora	8	16,621.67	483
Bataan	22	7,663.74	1,652
Bulacan	13	6,477.69	934
Nueva Ecija	24	7,661.34	1,994
Pampanga	4	3,446.19	922
Tarlac	15	7,949.94	2,150
Zambales	34	28,769.50	3,664
Regional Total	120	78,619.97	11,799

Source: DENR (As of December 31, 2003)
*A project represents one CBFMA award.

Zambales has the most number of projects (34), the biggest area covered (28,769.50), and the most number of participating households (3,664). Pampanga has the least number of projects (4), the smallest area covered (3,446) and the second lowest number of participating households (483).

THE CASE STUDY

I learned about the CBFM on television in May 1998 when the DENR advertised its invitation to local communities to help government reforest the mountains. I shared this information to the Handmaids for Christ, a group of mostly Ilocano women who had been holding fellowship and prayer meetings in a beautiful waterfall at the foot of Mt. Carampoan, a highly denuded mountain. This mountain looks below the rice fields of Senence Road, one of which is my family's rice field. At that time, we had been visiting the waterfall that we called Ubog on the invitation of my sister-in-law, one of the leaders of the religious group.

Along the way to the Ubog is a resettlement community called Sitio Cabaruan. The residents of the sitio—Aytas, Sambals and a few Visayans—were displaced Pinatubo victims resettled to the area in 1991. From the pioneer group of 100 families, 34 families were left by the time we met the sitio folks in 1998. All of them came from neighboring towns and from other barangays of the town of San Felipe. Of the 35 families, 34 were recipients of Certificate of Stewardship Contract (CSC) covering one hectare per contract under the ISF Program of the DENR.

As the sitio folks have been joining the Handmaids in the waterfall gatherings, we became friends with the Ayta chieftain and other residents. We invited the sitio folks to join our application for a CBFM Agreement. Initially, 14 families from the sitio joined our cooperative. The rest joined two years after.

By the time that we extended membership to all other residents of Cabaruan in 2002, the age average of our members was 41 years old.

Because the CBFM Program later absorbed the ISF Program, the DENR decided to include in our CBFM Agreement the 34 ISF hectares. The total area covered by our Agreement was 335 hectares.

Community is defined by the CBFM program as "A group of people who may or may not share common interests, needs, visions, goals and beliefs, occupying a particular territory which extends from the ecosystem geographical, political/administrative and cultural boundaries and any resources that go with it."

Reflecting on the definition of "community" during the early stages of the life of our cooperative, I thought that my differences with the members of the Handmaids women and the sitio folks were just the level of our needs and the immediacy of our reliance on the yield of our investments in the land.

For their daily needs, the sitio folks supplement their incomes as farm laborers from the resources of the forest. They gather wood for cooking and making charcoal, wild fruits and animals, bamboo for various purposes, and other resources.

The members of the Handmaids could afford not to depend on the resources of the forest for the short term. Many of them relied on remittances from family members abroad or from informal businesses in the town such as buying and selling, small livestock production, fishing, and other such types of livelihood.

My husband and I depended on our income from employment and business in the city.

All the members of the Handmaids were from the poblacion. My husband and most of the Handmaids women belonged to the Ilocano clans whose ancestors from Ilocos Sur and Norte settled in the town in the 1700s and 1800s. Many of them owned farmlots below Mt. Carampoan.

Hence, all of us—30 participating households at the start of the formation of our cooperative—qualified for the requirement of the CBFM for participants to be "Actually residing within or adjacent to the areas to be awarded."

The term "community" has been a puzzle to me from the time we applied for a CBFM Agreement. While the intention of the DENR to give priority to the poor members of the community around the project site is laudable, the poverty of the chosen beneficiaries poses a serious question on the capacity of these people to undertake the demanding task of reforestation.

There were many residents in the town and even in the barangay alone who have the concern for the environment, resources and skills but I was hesitant to suggest to the members to invite them as my gesture might be misconstrued as favoring the "haves" in the community.

As of the present, the Aytas in the PO consists of 19 individuals or a third of the 57 members of the cooperative, another third consists of Sambals who are either pure Sambals or intermarried with the Aytas, and half of the membership includes a mixture of Ilocanos, Tagalogs and Visayans. The presence of co-cultures in our PO best exemplified the CBFM program definition of a community whose members did not have commonalities but the place of residence. It is implied in program

documents that the DENR believes that through community organization, the members would be able to develop a sharing community despite heterogeneity.

The sitio folks lived in makeshift houses, fetched water from the Ubog, sent the kids for schooling three kilometers away, and depended on seasonal income from work for various farm owners in the town. They belonged to the poorest 100 families in the province and did not finish elementary school. Before the Mt. Pinatubo eruption, they worked as seasonal farm workers and occasionally sold backyard farm produce in the market. Some women worked as domestic helpers. After the eruption, they were resettled in Bgy. Carabasa, San Felipe.

When rains hit hard and lahar floods became heavy, they moved to a place called Apga in San Felipe. There they built tents until they were found by Sister C who was scouring the province of Zambales during the early post-Pinatubo days for unassisted victims. She asked the women leader—Benita—in the group to organize the heads of families for evacuation to Cabaruan. Sister C worked for the creation of Cabaruan resettlement and later the granting of the ISF stewardship certificates to the mentioned 35 families.

THE CONTEXT OF SCARCITY

When our cooperative started to work in the uplands in 1998 we were hopeful that reforestation would get substantial support from local and international agencies advocating for the protection of forest ecosystem. We were also hopeful that the national and local government—as our co-signatories in the CBFM Agreement—would assist us in terms of providing adequate road infrastructure and agro-forestry inputs like upland irrigation.

My expectation that the government supports infrastructures in reforestation comes from my understanding that assistance for cooperative agro-forestry—while partly a private business—is basically intended to protect and rehabilitate the forest ecosystem. The devolution of forest management function to communities is just a management strategy. The

country's commitment to the World Trade Organization (WTO) includes non-provision of subsidy to agricultural cooperatives. Agro-forestry ventures in CBFM may be considered partly a private agricultural production that does not justify a subsidy. However, the environmental protection aspect of CBFM's agro-forestry does because it is not only the PO beneficiaries who benefit from forest rehabilitation and protection, the rest of society does.

Through my network in the government I was able to secure support for a little infrastructure. This infrastructure came from government indeed, but I thought it was the job of the DENR as a matter of course to secure support for infrastructure. Reforestation is already a daunting task. To expect POs to search funding for heavy infrastructure is not only inconsistent with the fact that the Department chose poor forest residents as beneficiaries of CBFM contracts but also an added burden to them. While to let non-government organizations (NGOs) do this for POs—in my observation—is just like adding another layer of personnel in the reforestation bureaucracy consuming for overheads limited resources from international donors or taxes of the Filipino people.

During the first three years, the Department of Agriculture built us half-a-kilometer access road below the mountain, the program Lingap sa Mahihirap gave P140,000 for us to build three small makeshift water tanks and a senator's Countryside Development Fund (CDF) transferred P250,000 to the LGU for a bigger tank that was never completed by its contractor. The DENR and the Department of Agriculture donated a total of around 6,000 seedlings. The water tank was only enough to cover a hectare of land. The access road was below the mountain. To reach the top we had to struggle our way up through the bushy and rocky paths. Because of this ordeal, I bargained with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) contractor to include a stairway to the mountain in the access road construction.

These were all about what we got—a measly amount compared to the resources poured into model sites. For instance, a CBFM model site in

Sapangbato in the boundary of Pampanga and Tarlac was given some P31million over the course of five years in government assistance. This amount covered the costs of community organization for three years, technical assistance from the DENR staff, tree-planting funds consisting of irrigation, labor costs, seedlings, fertilizers, and maintenance expenditures for more than two thousand hectares of land.

All the model sites all over the country received funding in millions of pesos. The millions of expenditures in these areas give the impression that the DENR provides financial assistance to all CBFM projects. In reality, all the CBFM POs are supposed to generate funds on their own.

It has been perplexing for me how the DENR could pour millions in some POs but almost nothing for the rest, more so when policymakers themselves comment that performance in most model sites is good only while the funded project lasts *(Miyakawa, 2006)*. It is more perplexing why there should be model sites at all. When you model how a project should be done and spend millions for it, you are saying that all the other groups are capable of spending millions: money is not a problem, it is how to do it which is.

I would later be told by DENR CBFM staff that POs should not expect financing from the national government. After devolving the task of forest management to communities, the government role is supposed to be confined only to the monitoring of CBFM projects and to ensuring that the terms of the CBFM contract are observed. What we see as government support to some POs is not support to be construed as subsidies but expenses for the operation of model sites. As DENR literature reveals, this government program relies on the self-help of, and *bayanihan*[1] within, peoples' organizations *(DENR, 1996)*. Moreover, the policymakers in the Department would be quick to point out that community self-help is implicit in the CBFM Agreement for nothing in it says that the Department would provide infrastructure or any agro-forestry inputs.

To support our undertaking we needed to have a livelihood project that would have economies of scale. It should be a livelihood project that

would support the basic needs of households in the PO so that we would not need to find employment outside the project site. We were not able to set this up in five-years' time for lack of funds and because of a land dispute on our prospective site for an ethno-botanical garden. Moreover, young CBFM cooperatives with poor members, no collective track record in business and no collateral, have no access to rural credit that would create economies of scale.

MODES OF COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT IN THE COMMON

Hence for about five years of our PO's operation we relied heavily on our internal resources, to a great extent the *bayanihan* exchange of goods and services in a manner observed by Marcel Mauss in gift economy in traditional societies. In some of these exchanges, we would be straightforward to count costs and in some others we would be embarrassed to calculate who had given what to whom. What is important is the social product—goodwill, caring, respect, and trust—that develops in the process of exchange. And yet, this social product ensures that one is protected against scarcity or the occurrence of hunger: when a member of the community is in great need, the rest of the group takes care of his or her need. Therefore, in the equation of exchange, even if people refuse to calculate, things eventually become more or less equal because everyone would someday need others somehow.

After the awarding of our CBFM Agreement in March 1999, we, members of the cooperative agreed that we would secure parcels of land for individual families. We would also leave communal areas for our livelihood projects, for pathways, reserved areas for future community housing, school, clinic, processing center and produce store. The individual and communal areas would both have forest and fruit trees. We had good reasons why some areas should not be parceled or better left communal. Large areas should be devoted to farm production that needs economies of scale. Some areas are fragile and volatile and may adversely affect the productivity of land thus it is fair that resource users share the risks and benefits associated in cultivating them.

We wrote our plan in our Community Resource Management Framework.

With the CBFM Agreement awarded, we started to build a community. We built a cooperative hut beside a creek that receives the waterfall— which I earlier introduced as the Ubog—coming from the watershed on top of the mountain. Those of us who had cash donated money while those who did not, gave discounted labor to build the structure. Around the creek, we planted trees that have now grown into beautiful mahoganies and fruit trees. Marino, a Sambal disabled who made furniture out of bamboo wood, donated part of his labor in making the hut benches.

My husband and I and some relatively well-off members of the Handmaids for Christ sort of "adopted" the sitio residents. If we did not have personal funds for their needs, we looked for charities that could supplement what we gave them. In return, the sitio residents offered their services for our cooperative activities.

In meetings and little celebration and fiestas in the Ubog, the women of the Handmaids for Christ cooked while the sitio women and children washed the dishes. When we were at the creek all of us cleared it of litter and broken bottles left by outsiders who use the waterfall for picnics.

During planting time, all of us hauled seedlings up the mountain. The men—at discounted labor costs—planted, built fences and watered the plants. Those of us who had steady source of income from our profession or economic activities in the town or elsewhere did not receive compensation for our labor but we saw to it that when there were donated planting funds, we would pay the labor of the sitio men and women. I contributed my writing and research services by preparing feasibility studies, the CRMF and reports to the CDA, writing letters and linking with various institutions. My husband taught the men some planting technologies and facilitated the planning for planting and plant maintenance activities.

Benita, a Visayan migrant who learned scientific farming from her veterinarian ex-husband was a very effective and reliable women organizer. After separating from her husband she lived with a Sambal in Carabasa

and from then became part of the Pinatubo folks. She was the one who assisted a nun in organizing the transfer of the sitio folks from their lahar-flooded former barangay to Sitio Cabaruan. She managed the inventory of our coconut seedlings, the hauling of the seedlings up to the communal area and the nurturing of the young plants.

Couple Buena, an Ayta elder, and Antonio, a Visayan ex-worker in Clark Air Base, agreed to man the cooperative hut on top of the mountain located in the designated communal area. For a monthly allowance of P3,000.00 the couple became the mainstays in the upland. I thought that living in the upland was relatively uncomfortable than living in Sitio Cabaruan at the foot of the mountain. The couple had to negotiate the 750 steps of the stairway each time they need something in the lowland. Living in the upland required the courage and talent of the couple. Like the rest of the sitio folks—the couple knew how to live in the forest. They were familiar with the whole area, knew where the paths would turn, where the few trees bearing wild fruits and animals could be found, how to deal with wild animals, how to use indigenous plants for sickness and food, where lowlanders sneak to get wood to make charcoal. They could go up and down the mountain in a breeze.

The non-Aytas in the resettlement have learned to live like the Aytas too as far as courageous living in the forest is concerned. This is the sitio folks' share in forest management: the culture of survival in the forest that should be valued in the accounting of contribution to our communal effort.

The forest folks do not count fully the costs of their local knowledge and experience which, in my accounting, would be equivalent to values of my opportunity costs if I were the one to live in the upland communal area. Having couple Antonio and Buena to stay there should be equivalent to the cost of my life insurance plus the cost of my foregone earnings in the city.

I also consider as the couple's contribution or gift to the cooperative the network (being friends with the "wanderers" in the forests, be they strangers or real spirits as Buena oftentimes refer to her night visitors) they

developed through years of adaptation in the woods. Of course, living in the community hut is a privilege for the couple because they were near the vegetable plantation and were getting paid, something other members were jealous of them about. Maybe, in the balance of exchange—which goes unwritten and taken for granted—all of us were exchanging the true costs of our survival.

Surely those of us who were willing to donate labor and other resources expected to be compensated later because we hoped to set up a livelihood project that would give all of us a source of income while we were waiting for the harvest from our long-gestating investments.

GIFT ECONOMY AND LAND TENURE

Twenty-five years of land tenure in the upland, with possible tenure renewal for another twenty-five years, was—at the start of our project—an important enticement for us to manage the forest. Even if we did not have permanent ownership, we thought that 25 years was, for most of us senior members of the cooperative, enough for the rest of our lifetime. The possible renewal would be for our children.

We were willing to reforest the upland for ourselves and for others—all those who would be benefited by reforestation—in exchange for the tenure. At first, we did not count the costs of reforestation nor thought that we would ever be at a losing end. At the start, the plan for both individual and community concerns seemed to be enough to inspire collective action.

The CBFM contract gives POs a stewardship of a communal area but it is up to the group whether or not it would parcel the land into individual family lots. Unlike in the ISF, this parceling into individual lots within the CBFM is an internal arrangement in the PO. The members could adopt a system of land allocation that is honored by everyone. Our difficulty with this system, however, is that the members wanted the exact measurement of the lot and we did not have funds for the surveying of the land.

In the beginning the members were not yet so circumspect about land allocation. But after three years when we were expecting that we should already plant in individual areas, the members wanted the exact boundaries. We requested the DENR for surveying assistance but the technical assistant assigned to our area told us that surveying is a service that is not included in the DENR's responsibility. Since 2003, activities even in the first communal area that we identified and worked on began to wane until they completely stopped.

In order to understand what it was that caused the disinterest of our members in cooperative undertaking, I tried to isolate and reflect on each of the factors that contributed to the stoppage of work: lack of irrigation, the two forest fires that consumed our young plants, lack of a livelihood project and lack of land delineation.

It is very difficult to maintain the young trees without water. Our three makeshift tanks erupted after a year and the bigger tank funded by a legislator's CDF remained unusable after it was left incomplete by the contractor since 2003. As the area awarded to us is one of the most denuded mountains in Zambales—as is true in all CBFM areas that is why they need rehabilitation—there was not much water to generate for our planting needs. We really have to reforest first in order to produce enough water.

In 2000, one of our members discovered that the land beside the Ubog—the most important site for all of us being our prospective site for an ethno-botanical garden livelihood project—was an alienable and disposable land. She worked towards the purchase of the lot to the disagreement of those of us who understood the consequence of the purchase: the enclosing of the Ubog as a private property. Up to the present we are still awaiting the investigation of the DENR on the real status of the Ubog and while investigation is pending, we temporarily shelved the idea of making the waterfall a little resort.

In 2001 and 2002, two forest fires that came from agricultural clearing in lowland farms hit 90% of our plantation. As both fires attacked on summer, there was very little water in the creek and we could not generate

even enough for our young plantation. The sitio folks who watched helplessly the fire that devoured our plants despaired as our efforts for three years just went to naught.

After the series of debacles in our communal undertaking, I stopped going to the mountain for about a year beginning 2003. That year, we stopped submitting annual reports to the CDA because we thought the only person making money in our project was the accountant signing our report. My husband who was the most serious farmer among all of us and until early 2004 took care of the little plants left in the communal area likewise stopped going up. Meanwhile, since early 2004, he started to develop our own farmlot below the mountain, a kilometer away from Sitio Cabaruan.

After about a year, I visited Benita middle of 2004. Her second husband built a little hut some 500 meters away from Sitio Cabaruan. The couple planted vegetables in a piece of land owned by the municipal dentist who asked them to take care of his land. In return, the dentist allowed the couple to use his land and gave their child school allowance.

I saw an Ilocano member dug a piece of land in his own little backyard to make a fishpond.

The Handmaids leader who bought the land beside the Ubog migrated to America but left the care of the property to her daughter who represented her in the cooperative. Her property was well maintained. The seedlings that we planted in 1998 and 1999 beside the Ubog have now grown adorning her private property. She also bought a farmlot beside Sitio Cabaruan for her son to till.

Buena and Antonio did not abandon the cooperative hut on top of the mountain. The couple had from then been enjoying the harvest from the vegetable garden and fruit trees.

The rest went back to work other people's farm in nearby barangay or preoccupied themselves with their little home businesses.

It seemed to me that when I came back, all of us were either doing our own farmlots or minding our own business. Somehow I felt a little jealous for our communal area. Why were people seemed so driven now to work their individual farm below the mountain but not even visiting the communal area? But since I myself, was already enjoying my own farm, I stopped questioning the motivation of everyone.

In October 2004, we received a letter from the DENR asking us to explain why the Department should not cancel our Agreement after it found out that our PO seemed to have been non-functional.

POSITIVE EXTERNALITY AS AN UNRECIPROCATED GIFT IN CBFM

At a certain point of our operation we became uncertain whether our contributions would yield returns. Agro-forestry under CBFM was a risky business because of the vagaries of nature like typhoons, man-made calamities such as forest fires, and the threat of losing our cont~act. I do not know whether we could call our willingness to forget our losses as simply absorbing the risks associated with agribusiness. But when PO members know that the other part of our job is to prevent illegal logging, ensuring steady water supply to farms below, residential houses and business establishments, ensuring the absence of flooding and decrease of greenhouses gases, and not demand government for crop failure compensation or counterpart forest insurance, I want to call this gesture either a pure gift to society or utter altruism. Traditional economists would call this stupidity or an aberrant behavior. Mauss would say there is pleasure in giving that makes even the sincerest giving as not really altruism.

Hence, in Mauss' sense, I call the substantial part of our means to sustain the project as gift economy. Considering the positive externality *(Marshall, 1925)* or benefits to society of reforestation that is not internalized because government fails to reciprocate in behalf of the people, I include in our gift economy the government and the rest of the surrounding communities who benefit from our work. In this gift economy, government

is a stingy partner, and the surrounding community—especially that of lowland farmers who cause forest fires—do not appreciate nor understand the value of our reforestation to their livelihood. Surely their attitude was—to say the least— unencouraging.

COLLECTIVISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

Based on our experience, I can say that human beings can be communal. We had the capacity to cooperate, to communicate, and to have a sense of a common future. For a good three years we broke the commons dilemma. Within our group, we created security for everyone: when one was hungry, there would be food to eat in the neighbor's table. In the spirit of *bayanihan*, we created the foundation of an economy that would rely less on government support for welfare. Things went wrong only when we sensed that this government program asked us to do so much and to take a lot of risks—under a lopsided contract—in doing something that is beneficial not only for ourselves but for the rest of society as well.

We can also be very individualistic. Behind the desire of our members for family lot delineation in the common is an expression of a sense of individualism. Here in the individual lot, as in the family lots where some of us members of the PO, went back since 2003, is an area where we could do what we wanted. Sometimes it was a respite not to have to conform to the desires of the collective, to plant in our own individual garden, and not to have to account to the DENR or the CDA on what we did.

FILIPINO MODEL OF LAND TENURE

There is a model of land tenure that allows the expression of both the collective and the individualistic in us Filipinos. It existed prior to the arrival of the Spaniards as described by Plasencia (1589) and Morga (*1609*). In barangays, the natives had family lots that could be inherited

by heirs, traded for things, and pawned. In these lots, Morga observed the natives "sow their rice, and posess their palm trees, nipa and banana groves, and other trees, and implements for their fishing and sailing". In barangays there were also lands that were communally-owned, and beyond it there were open-access areas like forests where everybody got lumber for houses and ships and rivers which the natives used for irrigation, where they bathe themselves, fished, brought their animals to drink and washed their clothes.

In family fields where individualism could be expected to have nurtured itself among the Filipinos, it is interesting to note that collective action or *bayanihan* flourished. Corpuz *(1989)* noted that specialization became helpful to the growth of cooperative spirit among the Filipinos in family fields:

> The community life in the old barangays that had traded with the Chinese on a more or less regular basis by the 13th century would not have differed significantly in the early 16th century. Overall, life was essentially subsistence but not harsh. The environment in the settlement sites that the barangay people had chosen for their home was benign. Food gathering and hunting would become supplementary. Cultivation of the soil and fishing became primary livelihood activities. Fox notes the existence of specialization: 'smith, potter, midwife, trader, religious functionary, and others—but this specialization clearly would not be rigid, and everybody shared in the family's economic tasks. Land preparation, planting and harvesting, hunting and house building were done cooperatively by the families. This is the origin of the bayanihan or cooperative labor among neighbors and kinsfolk among modern rural Philippines. The tasks always ended in the afternoon, followed by feasting and drinking. The family whose land was plowed, or house built, hosted everybody. Thus an early fiesta tradition predated the colonial era, although the Spanish Christian saints eventually overshadowed the early economic basis of the tradition.

The land tenurial system as described by Plasencia and Morga still exists in the Ifugao Rice terraces in the Northern Philippines and is hailed even by the DENR because it has a built-in land use plan that has worked for centuries. There are two types of forestlands in Ifugao: the *muyong* or family woodlots and communal forests open to anyone. The *muyong* is taken care of by families, ensured that it is always productive and worthy to be inherited by the next generation. It is the source of wood for building houses, for fuel and woodcarving. As communal forests are open to anyone and large areas have been claimed by government, the community relies on the *muyong*—at the topmost elevation of the *payo* or the terraces—as source of water for the terraces below: the *habal* or swidden lots, the *boble* or the settlement districts and the *wangwang* or the braided river beds.

The DENR Treebu (*2005*) newsletter features this arrangement in an article entitled "*Muyong*":

> At the topmost level of this indigenous land utilization scheme, is the *muyung*. This area is primarily considered for water conservation, soil nutrient augmentation and wood production. In several indirect ways, it supports the existence of the other agroforest-ecological zones. The forest cover act as sponges that ensures rain water is effectively absorbed, stored underground, and gradually released to the *wangwang* so that even during dry seasons, irrigation water and aquatic resources remain sufficient. The forest litter, on the other hand, when decayed, enriches the soil nutrient that surface water brings on to the *habal* and *payo* areas. Sometimes when the soil acidity of these agricultural areas reaches unproductive level, forest litter are collected in certain spots in the *muyung* or *habal*, and then burned to induce soil liming. ...When a tree is cut, its branches, leaves, sawdust and stump are usually left in the *muyung* to decay or to be burned later. Only the trunk and large branches are brought down for utilization. The *muyung* is likewise a source of medicinal plants, rattan and other timber forest products.

CONCLUSIONS

Bayanihan, Filipino version of gift economy in the Philippines is a social mechanism expected by the DENR to enhance coordination and cooperation in forest management. Without it, the chosen beneficiaries—poor forest residents and migrants—cannot deliver the outputs expected of them in the CBFM Agreement.

There is a rather lopsided agreement in the CBFM contract—more responsibilities and investments are expected from poor POs for tasks with outcomes that are beneficial not only to the recipient community but also to the whole society. I consider the positive externality created by our work as unreciprocated gift.

The gift could be reciprocated by an assurance of individual security of the members of the group in the commons as well as adequate counterpart inputs from society—individual family tenure within the commons, ecology roads and irrigation, and appropriate rural credit for long-gestating agro-forestry projects.

Balancing the agency of the individualistic and collectivist nature of human beings is a recognition of universal human traits that find unique expression in the Philippines—particularly in the pre-historic land tenurial system that gave birth to the cultural practice of *bayanihan.* In CBFM, the PO members should at least be assured that they have private spaces for individual expression within the common.

Note

1 Originally an agricultural practice where farmers take turns on working each other's fields but was later used even in non-agricultural areas in the country and in various ways of helping each other or sharing one's resources to member/s of a group, a barangay or a community particularly in times of great need or scarcity. In some forms where exchanges do not have explicit agreement on a quid pro quo, this Filipino cultural practice could be considered Marcel Mauss' gift economy.

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