

**PARTICIPATION OF NON-ELITES (MARGINALIZED) IN THE
PHILIPPINE POLITICAL SYSTEM: CASE STUDY OF FARMER-
LEADERS IN GOVERNMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Since the restoration of democracy in the Philippines after the 1986 People Power Revolution, several mechanisms were put in place to allow non-elites to participate in the affairs of the government. The 1987 Philippine Constitution even recognized the importance of participation from non-elites. The Local Government Code of 1991 and the Party-list System Act of 1995 further expand non-elites' participation by allowing representatives of their sectors to sit in local government special bodies and providing twenty percent of the total allotted seats in the Philippine House of Representatives for non-elites if they garnered the required number of votes. Four cases of farmer-leaders who were elected into government positions were studied to see whether these mechanisms allowed genuine people's participation. Based on their cases, despite the inclusion of the concept of people's participation in the 1987 Philippine Constitution and the mechanisms that are in place through subsequent laws, genuine participation of non-elites in the Philippine Political system is not maximized. The domination of elites, landlords, and oligarchs in the Philippine economic and political system hindered genuine participation of non-elites in government. Genuine people's participation will empower and allow non-elites such as farmers, workers, urban poor and women to participate in the affairs of the government. This power can challenge the elite dominated Philippine Political system.

Keywords: Non-elites, People's Participation, Genuine Democracy, Philippine Political System

I. INTRODUCTION

The official recognition of independence of the Philippines came after the signing of the Treaty of General Relations by the representatives of the United States of America and the Republic of

the Philippines on July 4, 1946 (Gealogo, 2007). The American government handed over the sovereignty of the entire Philippine islands to the Philippine government. It paved the way for a democratic Republic of the Philippines that gave its citizens the power to elect government officials through elections. This also enabled the Filipinos to participate in politics. Democracy, as a government system, afforded rule of laws that applies equally to all the citizens of the country, including the protection of human rights.

Democracy allowed the people to choose their leaders and hold them accountable for their policies, as well as, their conduct in office. When President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, it united the Filipinos to struggle and defend democracy. Filipinos fought the dictatorship of Marcos to end martial rule and tyranny.

The declaration of Martial Law by Marcos exposed the kind of democracy that was implanted by the United States in order for them to hold the Philippines even if they declared its independence. This democracy is elite dominated. The political system established by the US became a breeding ground for elites in the Philippine government. The US colonizers, in order to still hold the country, handed over the government to their elite counterparts in the Philippines.

Aside from the restoration of democracy, the people also wanted to change the elite orientation of Philippine politics. The fight against Martial Law in the Philippines was thought to be the end of elite dominance in government affairs.

The concept of people power was carried over even to the crafting of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. It highlighted the restoration of freedom, civil liberties and democracy in the country. Progressive people's organization, social movements, civil society organizations, freedom loving individuals and democracy experts were the essential force in the restoration of democracy in the Philippines.

Empowerment became a popular concept of government reforms and ideals of good governance, in the Philippines and internationally, this paper looked into the concept of non-elite or marginalized actors participating in the mainstream Philippine political system. The 1987 Constitution, subsequent laws, and international policies that advocate citizen's empowerment and participation allowed the participation of non-elites in governance. This paper will answer the questions: *How open is the current Philippine political system in allowing non-elites (marginalized sectors) to participate and become part of the government? Are the mechanisms of empowerment and participation enough for the non-elites to say that there is a genuine empowerment and participation in the Philippines' current political system?*

The paper also:

1. Assessed the level of participation of non-elites (marginalized sectors) in mainstream Philippine political system;
2. Measured their performance based on the principles of good governance particularly on the concept of transparency and accountability;
3. Presented the challenges encountered by non-elites during their stint as elected officials of the government; and

II. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Elite dominated Philippine political system:

Starting from the time of American colonization until the start of World War II, the Philippine political system was described to be elite dominated. A small fraction of the Philippine population occupied seats in the American colonial political system from 1907-1946. The colonizers established a political system wherein the qualifications of officials deterred the participation of non-elite actors. These qualifications were based on the individual's socio-economic and political status, and their allegiance to the American colonial authority (Gealogo, 2007). These qualifications excluded people from the marginalized sectors such as women, indigenous people, farmers, workers and those who fought the American rule from participating in the elections and to join the political system.

The remnants of elite dominated Philippine political system were re-established after the World War II (1947-1972) when the United States proclaimed the independence of the Philippines from Japanese occupation. It was during this period that the differences and contradiction among the elites in the government was rampant that caused factionalism and political violence. These contradictions caused the instability of Philippine political parties. Many of politicians mastered the art of turncoatism or being political butterflies especially when their political party loses in the election (Gealogo, 2007 p.15). They changed political parties in favor of the winning political party. This was not only manifested in the National level but also in the local levels. Their shifting allegiance and loyalty to a political party can be seen as a manifestation of serving their self-interest and not the interest of their constituents.

Political infighting and contradiction among the elites reached its peak during the administration of Ferdinand Marcos when he declared Martial Law. Marcos as the representative of one faction of the elites consolidated the hold on the Philippine political system through martial rule. From 1972-1986 the martial law regime of Marcos showcased the authoritarian tendencies of an elite dominated politics. Authoritarian rule is necessary in order to consolidate a faction of the elites at the expense of their rival elites in the political system.

After Martial Law (1986-present), the problem of elite dominated Philippine politics still persists. This is despite of the fact that the 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes the role of non-elites in the affairs of the government. Political infighting, factionalism, and turncoatism among the elites is still prevalent and being practiced.

Mechanisms for citizen empowerment and people's participation in the Philippines:

The EDSA People Power Revolution of 1986 that ousted Marcos provided opportunities for the people and their organizations to actively participate in government affairs. Guided by the concept democratization that gives premium to people power, people empowerment, and people's participation, the 1987 Philippine Constitution assumed a progressive stance as it highlights the importance of non-government and people's organizations' role in promoting the country's welfare and national development, as declared in the following articles and sections:

Art 2, Sec.23: The State shall encourage non-governmental, community-based, or sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation;

Art 13, Sec. 15: The State shall respect the role of independent people's organizations to enable the people to pursue and protect, within the democratic framework, their legitimate and collective interests and aspirations through peaceful and lawful means. People's organizations are bona fide associations of citizens with demonstrated capacity to promote the public interest and with identifiable leadership, membership, and structure.

Art 13, Sec. 16: The right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged. The State shall, by law, facilitate the establishment of adequate consultation mechanisms.

Decentralization and devolution of the power of the National Government was introduced and gave autonomy to the various Local Government Units (LGUs) in the implementation of the Republic Act 7160, also known as the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991. R.A. 7160 reinforced the role of POs as well as NGOs in the aspect of people's participation in various affairs of the local government:

Section 34. Role of People's and Non-governmental Organization – Local government units shall promote the establishment and operation of people's and non-governmental organizations to become active partners in the pursuit of local autonomy.

Participative mechanisms were institutionalized and became a venue for the active involvement of the people and their communities in decision-making processes within the local government. These mechanisms enabled the people to become active in the affairs of the government through participatory democracy (Legaspi, 2001, p.9).

As stated in the Local Government Code and the 1987 Constitution, POs and NGOs if given opportunities to participate in the government can be considered as effective partners in delivering services for the people.

However, due to their orientation, LGU officials are apprehensive in dealing and working with POs and NGOs, especially to those who are recognized to belong to the progressive organizations that were critical of the government. This is also true to the POs and NGOs, because government officials are perceived as hindrance to genuine development. Members of POs and NGOs sometimes clash with the local executives especially when it comes to issues of corruption, human-rights violation, and inefficient delivery of services. Local chief executives rarely allow members of progressive POs and NGOs to represent their sector in local committees.

LGU officials more often abhor the “interventionist attitude of POs and NGOs and their ‘messianic’ approaches and solutions that they bargain to the people” (Villarin, 1996).

The introduction of the Party-list System in the 1987 Constitution allowed for the participation of the marginalized sectors in the House of Representatives. Sectoral representatives can occupy allotted seats in the House of Representatives when they earned the required number of votes relative to the total number of Party-list votes. It gave an opportunity for POs and NGOs to become members of the National Government and craft policies and laws that will benefit their sectors and constituencies (R.A. 7941)

The 1987 Constitution, the Local Government Code, and the Party-list Systems Act solidified and strengthened the importance of participation and partnership of POs and NGOs in the affairs of the government both in the local and the national level.

The restoration of democracy brought about by the EDSA People Power Revolution advances the concepts of empowerment, participation, and collaboration. Enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution were the ideals of empowering the marginalized, giving voices to the voiceless, and active participation.

III. METHODOLOGY

Case study was used to analyze the experience of the research respondents in their participation in local and national governance. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted to get information and data for the case study. The research respondents were also interviewed.

Farmer leaders in government:

The researcher used the cases of four farmer leaders who were elected at the local and national levels as presented in the Article "*Participation of Farmer Leaders in Local and National Governance Structures: Will it Work?*" published in the Philippine Journal of Social Development in 2013 which the researcher co-authored. The researcher asked permission and was granted by the Main Author to use the cases presented in the study.

The researcher chose the case study respondents based on the following criteria:

1. They do not belong to any mainstream political party or they are not member of any political clan.
2. They are leaders and members of People's Organizations before they were elected as government officials
3. They belong to the marginalized sectors

Since the study was conducted five years ago, most of the respondents had ended their term as local and national government officials. Rafael Mariano for instance, ended his term as ANAKPAWIS Party-list Representative in 2013 but continued his work as Chairperson of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines) from 2013-2016 until he was appointed as Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform by President Rodrigo Duterte in 2016. However, Mariano's confirmation was rejected by the Commission of Appointments in September 2017.

The name, gender, age, their People's Organization, elective position and locality of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Respondents

Name / Gender / Age	People's Organization	Position / Time Period	Locality
Rafael Mariano / M / 56	Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines)	Anakpawis Party-list Representative to Congress / 2004, 2007, 2010	National level (party-list)
Miriam Villanueva / F / 40	Kalipunan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka sa Timog Katagalugan (Alliance of Peasant Organizations in Southern Tagalog)	Village Councilor / 2007	Bgy.Langkaan, Dasmariñas, Cavite
Paul Mallari / M / 41	Alyansa ng Manggagawang Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (Alliance of Farmworkers in Hacienda Luisita)	Village Councilor / 2010	Bgy. Balete, Tarlac City
Herberto Holgado / M / 49	Samahan ng Magsasaka sa Batangas (Farmers' Organization of Batangas)	Town Councilor / 2010	Lemery, Batangas

Source: Bawagan et.al, 2013, p. 41

Of the four respondents, only one is female and the rest are males, with the ages ranging from 40 to 56 years. The respondents all grew up in farming communities and started working in the farm at a young age. Despite economic hardships, their parents ensured that they went to school. The respondents attained at least high school education. They continue to till their small lands and remained farmers even after they got elected.

Representative Mariano, Town Councilor Holgado, and Village Councilor Villanueva reached college but were not able to finish because they had to earn a living for their family and sacrifice their college education. Village Councilor Mallari was a high school graduate.

At a young age they wanted to serve their communities. They were already active members of their community and were involved in various community and school organizations. They were also involved in various community development projects that were implemented by their organizations in partnership with LGUs, development institutions, churches, and school organizations.

The respondents became more determined and resolute to advance their sector's interest because of their experience and deep involvement in their organization and community.

According to Representative Mariano:

"I saw how farmers were exploited. We worked hard in tilling the land, but instead of progress, we became more impoverished. Gradually, I began to understand the root of oppression, exploitation, and effects of a rotten system."

IV. FINDINGS

Before they were elected as government officials:

The respondents, prior to their elections as government officials, were leaders of farmer organizations in their respective provinces and regions. They acquired leadership and organizational skills through years of active membership in the organization. They brought these skills with them when they were elected government officials in their localities.

Those who were elected in the local positions ran as individual candidates who sought the approval and support of their farmer's organization and members. For Representative Mariano, who got elected in the national government position as a party-list representative, he was nominated in the general assembly of the Peasant Movement of the Philippines, his organization, to represent their sector. His nomination was affirmed in the Anakpawis Party-list Convention.

He became one of the nominees of the party-list in the national election. In the party-list election, the people vote for the party-list and not the name of those individuals who were nominated.

The support of their family and their organization was essential during the filing of their candidacy, as well as, during the campaign period. According to the respondents, they experienced hardships during the campaign period. In the Philippines, the election process

including the campaign periods are dominated by the elites who use guns, gold, and goons. Since the respondents belong to marginalized sectors, they do not have the resources and funds to advertise in radio and television, to provide posters, stickers, and other campaign paraphernalia, and to hire the services of public relations and marketing firms like traditional politicians do.

They used the donations of their family members and other supporters. They do not have the luxury of accessing funds provided by big political parties and big business firms. Councilor Villanueva only spent P2,000 for the entire campaign period when she ran in the local elections.

Councilor Mallari's election was beefed up by the organization Alliance of Farmworkers in Hacienda Luisita (AMBALA) during his electoral campaign in the 2007 and 2010 elections. Since the members of the organizations campaigned for him, he did not shell out any funds.

The same predicament was also experienced by Mariano during his candidacy as party-list representative. Since Anakpawis Party-list belongs to the progressive organizations, they do not have the backing and support of traditional political parties as well as individual and big business firms. Their party-list has limited airtime in radio and television, they could not afford the services of artists for endorsement, and they don't have the capacity to hire campaign strategist and marketing/public relations firm. Their only funding came from the contribution of their members and supporters, and pledges from individuals or groups who have the same advocacies.

The Republic Act No. 9006 or the Fair Elections Act of the Philippines outlined the Election Campaign Rules in its Implementing Rules and Regulations. It provided the guidelines for campaign spending during elections. For candidates for Presidents and Vice Presidents the maximum amount that they can spend per registered voters is ten pesos. For independent candidates and Party-list candidates, the amount is five pesos per registered voter in the constituency where the candidate filed the candidacy (RA 9006, 2001).

In Mariano's case, when he ran as a Party-list Representative, the total numbers of registered voters were 43,536,028 for 2004 election, 45,029,443 for 2007 election, and 50,723,733 for 2010 election. Following the R.A. 9006, his group should have Php217,680,140 (2004 elections), Php225,147,215 (2007 elections), and Php253,618,665 (2010 elections) as campaign fund. These are huge amounts of money which Mariano and his party-list group claimed that they did not have.

In the Philippines, traditional political clans and dynasties employ personality-based strategy coupled with entertainment as well as false promises to win the elections. Unlike the traditional politicians, the marginalized sectors represented by these leaders elevated their campaign by presenting issues that their organizations advocate. These issues include land reform, wage increase, free education, and increase of budget for social services, among others which could

help alleviate the conditions of their poor constituents. For them, it was more important to discuss such issues in order to get the support of the people since these issues were the people's interests. They did not offer promises unlike traditional politicians, instead they gave their commitment to their constituents to carry their issues and concerns and work for the benefit of the people once elected.

As an elected government official:

True to their advocacies, the respondents advanced the interest of their sector when they were elected as government officials. Through their positions, issues such as human rights violations committed against the people, were exposed and deliberated to the local councils and in the Philippine House of Representatives. They delivered privilege speeches to expose and oppose repressive policies and programs. They supported policies that are beneficial to their sectors and constituents while opposing those that can harm them. They maximized the opportunity as legislators and members of different committees to work for the interest of their sector and the people. In order to advance the interests of their sectors, they also built alliances and networks among elected officials of the government that were supportive to their advocacies.

But even if they became elected officials, they were not exempted by the attacks of their enemies which are more often those who are in power and those who wanted to maintain the status quo. These attacks ranged from intimidation and bullying, filing of trump up charges and cases, and red-tagging.

Villanueva recalled that her stint as elected councilor was the worst experience of her life because of intrigues and misinformation against her by those who do not want her in the council. She was barred from committee membership especially the committees that she had an advocacy such as the Committee on Agriculture. They viewed that if she handled the Committee on Agriculture she can make reforms and even pursue the issue of land reform and the farmer's right to their land. She was given membership in the Committee on Education and Human Rights and because of her principled stand and dedication to serve their constituents, she managed those committees very well from 2007-2010.

In another case, a private banking corporation filed a criminal case against 23 individuals who are members of AMBALA including Councilor Mallari for grave coercion and occupation of real property. He was included in the legal case because of his active involvement in the organization which campaigned for the distribution of Hacienda Luisita lands.

In 2006, when former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo declared State of National Emergency, legislators from the progressive Party-list organizations were charged with rebellion before the

Department of Justice (DOJ) by the Philippine National Police (PNP). Mariano was among those who were charged as representative of Anakpawis Party-list

These findings from the study showed that even if the respondents were elected as public officials, they were still attacked because of their advocacies that went against the interest of the landlords and big businesses in connivance with the political elites in the government.

V. DISCUSSION

On Level of Participation:

The cases of the farmer leaders presented in this paper provided an insight on the participation that the government allows to non-elites (marginalized sectors) in the Philippine political system. Despite of the laws that introduced mechanisms for people's participation such as the Philippine constitution, Party-List Law, and the Local Government Code of 1991, authentic and genuine participation is far from being realized.

Using the four aspects of comparison for authentic and unauthentic participation namely interaction, role of administrator, role of citizen, and decision-making (King, Feltey, and Susel, 1998), the Philippine government is way behind in implementing authentic participation. While the government declares that they are collaborative with the people, most often than not, the government and the people are in conflict especially if policies and programs contradict the interest and advocacies of the people.

In Villanueva's case, the powerful owner of Ramos lands influenced the village council to go against Villanueva because of her advocacy to distribute the disputed land. In the case of

Mallari, he was charged with a criminal case because of his active involvement as a member of the organization which called for the distribution of the Hacienda Luisita lands to farmworkers. The Hacienda Luisita is owned by the family of two former presidents of the Philippines.

Government administrators view themselves as experts in their field while they treat citizens as unequal partners. Consultation with stakeholders is a prerequisite for the government before they implement projects and programs. However, most of the time, these consultations were only conducted for compliance and not to get the feedback and insights of the citizens.

In the experience of Villanueva and Mallari, they advocated and pushed for a more participatory consultation; however, their voices were not heard in their respective councils. Their co-officials often voted against their proposals and positions on issues. Authentic participation is recommended to be the framework of the government to allow people's empowerment. See Table 2 below.

Table 2: Comparison of Authentic and Unauthentic Participation

	Authentic	Unauthentic
Inter-action	Collaborative	Conflictual
Role of Administrator	Collaborative Technician / Governor	Expert Technician / Manager
Role of Citizen	Equal Partner	Unequal Participant
Decision Making	Emerges as a result of discourse; equal opportunity for all to enter the discourse and to influence the outcome	Decision is made by administrator perhaps in consultation with the citizens

Source: King, Feltey, and Susel, 1998, p.321

The case of the farmer leaders proved that the Philippine government is elite-dominated. While there are policies that allows non-elites to participate in the government through elections, assertions of their ideas, mobilization of constituents, as well as engagement in the decision-making processes, their participation is limited to the boundaries of existing laws and policies.

In the Philippine Congress, for a bill to become a law, it should be passed by a majority of legislators before it is forwarded to the Senate for another round of deliberation and votation. If the proposed bill did not garner enough votes, it will not be passed into a law. In the 15th Congress, Mariano authored more than 153 proposed house bills including the Rice Industry Development Act, An Act Regulating the Resicada System in the Coconut Industry, An Act Providing Security of Tenure for Farmers, and Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill as an alternative to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, all of which are for the interest of the farmers but these were not enacted.

Majority of the legislators in the Philippine Congress are landlords and landed elites. In a political system like the Philippines which is oligarchic in nature and elite-dominated, power is at the hands of the elites who control not just the political aspect, but the cultural and economic aspects as well. They have the hegemony from policy and decision making, and to crafting and implementation of laws. Since they are in power, they use the resources and the machinery of the

state to strengthen and consolidate their wealth and power. The people are always at the mercy of the elites who have the power to control the government.

Even the Party-list Law which allows representative of the marginalized sector to be elected into Congress hinders people's participation. The law explicitly limits the maximum number of seats for party-list representation to only twenty percent of the total available seats in the Philippine House of Representatives.

Participation is important especially if there is unequal distribution of power. Participation in this sense provided the redistribution of power from the hands of the elites that will enable the citizens especially the marginalized sectors to be deliberately included in the matters and affairs of the government (Arnstein, 1969 as cited in Fung, 2006, p. 67)

On Good Governance Concept:

Transparency is defined as the availability of information to the general public and clear government rules, regulations, and decisions while accountability connotes making public officials answerable for government behavior and responsive to the entity from which they derive authority (ADB, 1995 as cited in Brillantes et al., 2015, p.117).

In a corrupt-ridden country, it is very important to have mechanisms like transparency and accountability as promoted in the governance paradigm. This is to ensure check and balance of the use of public resources. As leaders of organizations, they value the principles of democracy, people's participation, empowerment, social justice, transparency and accountability (Bawagan et al., 2013, p.40). These principles are essential as farmer leaders because they are always dealing with people and organizations. As members of their sector, they vowed to be transparent and accountable at all times. These are the principle and discipline they gained from their involvement with progressive organizations.

They carried these principles in their respective offices and consciously practiced them during their stint as government officials. They also demanded transparency and accountability from different government offices and institutions. During budget deliberations in the local and national government, they meticulously studied every item in the proposed budget. They were keen in looking into how the government uses public funds. Most of the times, they were in disagreement with other officials but according to them they were just doing their jobs and it was their responsibility to be transparent and accountable to their constituents.

The farmer-leaders in the government can only do so much because they were also marginalized in an elite-dominated political system. The sincerity in public service and the passion to serve by the farmer-leaders were maligned by the elites through personal attacks and discrediting of their

advocacies. They were branded as rebels, subversives, and became targets of red-tagging and vilification. All respondents had been tagged as members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army.

The cases presented proved that even if there are mechanisms that allow the non-elites to join the government as elected officials, it is not enough because of the dominance of powerful groups and individuals in the government that limits and hinders their participation.

VI. CONCLUSION

It is a welcome development for allowing marginalized sectors, as in this case the farmers, to participate in the affairs of government. However, based on the experience of the respondents, the Philippine political system obstructs genuine peoples' participation and empowerment.

The goal of governance paradigm is to challenge the existing elite-dominated government by allowing citizen's participation, people empowerment, and democratic governance. It recognizes the vital role of the people through organizations as forces in promoting pro-people development agenda. Representation of the non-elites in the decision-making and crafting of laws and programs should be safeguarded.

However, governance paradigm in the context of mainstream Philippine politics is problematic. Governance is the interrelations of the state, business sector, and the civil society organizations. From this perspective, governance is democratic because of the participation of non-state and non-elite actors. The problem is that the Philippine government represents the interests of big businesses, landlords, and the oligarchs, even at the expense of the people. The neo-liberal policies of privatization, liberalization, and deregulation promote the interests of the business sector. Among these are the Public and Private Partnership of the Aquino Administration and the Build, Build, Build Economy of the Duterte Administration.

Due to the close relationship of the State and business sector, it solidifies their hold in the decision-making, policy implementation and to the domination of elites in the Philippines. While the government brandishes democracy, the interests of the majority of the people are at the mercy of those who are in power as shown in the experience of the respondents.

The elites are against reforms and fundamental social change. They are afraid that if the marginalized are empowered, they can challenge the status quo.

A genuine democracy upholds the interest of the people. The people should have a voice in government especially if the programs and policies being crafted and implemented will have an

effect on their lives. Genuine consultations should be conducted to guarantee that programs and policies serve the needs of the people.

In the Philippines, the people, especially the marginalized, should work towards genuine people's participation and empowerment particularly towards the control of their resources. The marginalized sectors such as the farmers should be given opportunity in building grassroots political power that will give way to a genuine people's participation and empowerment strongly entrenched among their ranks. In order to do so, they should:

1. Organize, educate, provide capacity building, and consolidate their ranks and the people.
2. Study, analyze, and comprehend the root causes of underdevelopment and poverty in order to have a good strategy. They should also craft policies in consultation with the people so that these policies promote their rights and interests
3. Advocate for the review of participatory mechanisms in government processes and systems. Forward participatory governance and genuine democratic governance to empower the people.
4. Work towards an alternative national development program that will represent the interests of the people.
5. Develop more leaders from the marginalized sector, such as the respondents, who can represent, articulate, and engage the elite dominated Philippine political system without compromising their progressive stance on issues.

The lessons from the experience of the farmer leaders should guide the promotion of genuine and authentic people's participation. Genuine participation will empower the marginalized sectors. Power that can challenge the existing domination of elites in the Philippine political system.

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