

Chapter 9

Local Dynamics of Rural Social Movement Organizations

'The peasant movement ... does not exist just to serve the interests of the individual, but must also be a united struggle movement (*strijdbeweging*) for creating a society that is both fair and prosperous, a society without the exploitation of the common people' (Soekarno 1962:12).¹

Land is a crucial problem in Indonesia especially for social movement groups, either challenging the New Order regime before Suharto's downfall, or more recently reviving a constitutional mandate for social justice and welfare. Indonesia's developing rural social movement has made the land issue part of the substantial rural democratisation process since the 1980s. The 1998 reformation movement opened a wider space to develop political influence. This contradicts the conclusion of some observers that democratisation processes in Indonesia have only occurred since the fall of Suharto in 1998. The 1998 *reformasi* has opened more political space for crafting new institutions in democratic political life. Political struggle to take land back as the right of poor peasants essentially encouraged rural democratisation many years before the 1998 reformation movement, which means the rural poor and other social groups – even based in urban areas – were using unconventional ways, including mobilization and mass protests, to express their demands for better

¹ President Soekarno's speech to the Indonesian Peasant Union (BTI, Barisan Tani Indonesia) cadres at the opening ceremony of the 4th National Congress of BTI in Jakarta in 1962.

livelihoods and citizenship in a democratic way, which they were not able to do through formal political institutions.

We have seen in the two previous chapters (especially in Chapter VIII), that rural social movements can be developed without being based on land problems alone. It was the political interests of the activists that created the movements rather than rural social problems. These interests also determined social movement dynamics, orientation and objectives, as we will discuss in this chapter, through a comparison of STaB and SPP efforts to challenge the authorities regarding their respective movement claims, namely 'land and power for the people'² and 'struggle for agrarian reform'³.

9.1 A Wider Comparison of Land Claim Actions

It has been explained throughout this thesis why land has always been a political issue in Indonesia. Rural land that according to the BAL essentially belonged to the peasantry, especially poor and landless peasants, was transferred mostly to large-scale capitalist enterprises during the New Order regime. As a result of unequal land distribution, conflicts occurred in many places, while repressive control did not allow pro-rural social movements to change any policies (see chapter V-VII). However land conflicts and local resistance provided opportunities for social movement activists to intensify grassroots activities to challenge the regime.

Some campaigns and advocacy had a limited impact on peasants' rights over land, including as victims of evictions, while direct land occupations helped in the formation of autonomous local peasant organisations, which supported peasants' rights and the consolidation of power over land of the rural poor. The 1998 *reformasi* movement provided more political

² 'Land and power for the people' was the Bengkulu activists' political slogan which became the STaB movement objective as we saw in chapter VIII.

³ 'Struggle for agrarian reform' is the SPP movement slogan.

opportunities for rural social movements groups to advance their political agendas on agrarian reform and to rebuild the new mass rural politics.

Rural social movement organisations 'took over' the duty of the State to uphold rights to land through collective actions - especially the rights of landless and near landless peasants, as well as other marginalised rural villager. Rather than litigation, they relied on land occupations to promote policy changes. Litigation was only used in cases where peasants' actions were criminalised, and were sometimes part of a strategic campaign to get peasants' rights legalised. Legal processes, criminalisation, arrests and imprisonment were seen as part of the political education of cadres and members, to give them a broader view of their struggle for social justice.

Initially participants in land claim actions only wanted land without giving attention to the political implications of their actions, even though they certainly took into account the likely impact on their personal security. Yet for activists campaigned in these actions, land occupation was a strategic method to build a power base for other, bigger political interests. Collective land occupation improved the mass-based organisation's ability to challenge authorities, and to be involved in institutional politics at all levels. When these two interests - the need for land for livelihood and the power to challenge government authority - were united and organised in systematic activities, they became a dynamic force in rural political life.

Although both STaB and SPP used land issues in different ways, the different characteristics in the rural social movements in Bengkulu and eastern Priangan reflected the kind of contribution made by the two movements to the process of democratisation in both regions. In this context, SPP concentrated more on land issues and the struggle for agrarian reform. Its activists believed rural mass-based power was important to overthrow the economic power of large plantations and face up to local authorities who denied people's rights to land. STaB activists in Bengkulu believed that they could increase their power through mass politics and achieve their aim of becoming a significant political

group in Indonesia (through the PPR), even though they did not use land as the main means of consolidating their movement. These different points of departure had implications for the movements' strategies for building a rural coalition, a rural-urban alliance, leadership, as well as their interest in local and national politics and their role in international coalitions. This is shown in Table 9.1 below.

Table 9.1 Strategic Issues and Implications in Organizing Rural Social Movements

Movement organisation and issues	Leadership and organisational structure	Strategies to build a rural coalition	Rural-urban alliances	Initiatives for peasant organising at the national level	Interest in international coalition building and campaigns	Interest in local and national institutionalised politics	Interests in party politics
SPP and its concentration on land issues	Generated and led by ex-student activists Coalition of district level organisations Power and decision making processes concentrated in General Secretary	Grassroots organising limited to groups of peasants, mostly landless, that occupied state land or in land conflict areas only Intensive leadership training to improve political capacity of local leaders to manage local chapters and to influence decision-making processes in village and district levels	Strong relations with urban-based networks on land advocacy, particularly at national level	Strongly concerned to influence national peasant organisations (coalitions at national level)	Less concerned, because it had a very small impact on getting land back for local people	Using national and local elections to put land issues on the agenda of institutionalised (party) politics Intensive pressure and lobbying local and national authorities about land affairs	Reluctant to link their coalition with initiatives to form new political parties Mostly preferred to use existing political parties and lobbies as a vehicle for its cadres to be involved in elections
STaB and its broader focus on rural problems not limited to land	Generated and led by ex-student and NGO activists, and local politicians Structured provincial level organisations with several district branches Power and decision making processes based on meetings of members but steered by a limited group of activists	Grassroots organising conducted with groups of villagers mostly <i>perantau tanah</i> , that occupied state land; villagers in land conflict areas; villagers demanded better rural public facilities; and participation in smallholder rubber plantations Dominated by non-litigation, legal aid and social analysis training and approaches	Limited relations with urban-based networks for land advocacy; more concentrated on the networks of social movement groups for political party building	Less concerned with influencing national peasant organisations (coalitions at the national level)	Less concerned, because has no impact on local and national politics and consolidation	Using national and local elections to consolidate bases with voters as members Intensive lobbying of local government	Strongly concerned to link the coalition toward formation of a new political party

9.1.1 Scaling Up Movement Bases at the Local Level and Strategies to Secure Occupied Land

Even though they emphasise different things, both SPP and STaB have made land issues an important political issue to build their mass bases and thereby influence politics. These mass bases and collective land claims became stronger after the fall of Suharto in 1998, which was followed by a weakening of State repression. Despite grassroots organisation and consolidation for many years, the existence of these organisations was only made public just after the regime changed in 1998. Likewise, popular education and grassroots organizing activities had been conducted since the New Order period by both SPP and STaB, oriented towards delegitimizing the practices of authoritarianism and empowering their own struggle and vision. In the post-authoritarian New Order period, this kind of education and community organizing strengthened existing bases and improved their leaders' political capacity, especially in the eastern Priangan; in Bengkulu it supported villagers in elections (local and national) and strengthened new bases for the formation of the new political party PPR.

A lot of land conflicts in West Java, particularly in eastern Priangan, and an intensive campaign on land issues conducted by Garut-based activists during the *Reformasi* period, made 'land and agrarian reform' the main struggle issue when they set up the SPP. Their intense relationship with other West Java agrarian activists based in LPPP and LBH-Bandung, who promoted agrarian reform and who had initiated the formation of the first autonomous local peasant organisation (SPJB) (see chapter VI), strengthened their political conviction about the importance of rebuilding a mass-based rural social movement, particularly after the decline of SPJB in the mid-1990s. This is why peasants connected to land issues dominated the SPP membership. Little government attention on resolving land problems led these peasants who were seeking back-up to join SPP, because they held land only in a *de facto* way, without formal certification or recognition. However, some success stories about land occupation motivated other groups, mostly landless, to work with the SPP.

In Bengkulu, even though the formation of STaB was preceded by grassroots organisation in a land conflicted area, land conflicts in this province

did not occur with the same frequency as in West Java. While sporadic and less organised land occupations conducted by *perantau tanah* did take place, in areas where peasants had problems they went to PKBH legal aid offices for help and to see how they could integrate their activities with STaB.

This did not mean that STaB made no contribution to collective land occupation activities. In some areas STaB did have strategies for occupying land. However the Bengkulu activists' original vision to build a new organisation led them to concentrate on recruiting new members and followers. They could not rely on land occupations only, but had to use other ways of recruiting as many villagers as possible to join the organisation.

Thus STaB used various government-initiated peasant groups, formed by local government to channel rural development grants and credits, to enlarge their political bases. These were peasant groups formed by local authorities since the New Order period to be recipients of the government grants, credits and other assistance, to improve productivity. Even though these groups were asked to submit proposals, they waited for various kinds of assistance that was determined by the government. Furthermore their proposals were limited to income generating projects. STaB reconsolidated these groups to be involved not only in income generating projects, but also to question the rights of peasants and other villagers, particularly for the provision of rural public facilities. STaB and PKBH activists thus changed these peasant agricultural production groups into rural pressure groups which aimed to influence wider local government policies. STaB relied on these peasant groups to consolidate its bases especially in less land conflicted areas.

An awareness about land occupation as the first step in pursuing wider social change made these organisations intensify their efforts to maintain each group's cohesiveness and spread their political networks. Development of political organising in local elections was one of the Bengkulu activists' main strategies to maintain consolidation of the bases; while to strengthen their political networks at the national level, they helped found the PPR.

Another strategy implemented at the local level was the formation of new villages within claimed areas. Through intensive lobbying of local authorities at sub-district and district levels, they pushed the creation of new villages 'from below'. On one hand this created villages whose landholdings were secure, even though they were still *de facto* located within plantation estate or state forest area. On the other, the establishment of new village government was important to develop political consolidation at the grassroots level; this meant that STaB cadres, who held leadership positions in these new villages, could organise the movement through these formal administrative positions.

A higher population density in eastern Priangan region compared with Bengkulu, however, made it unfeasible to organise a similar strategy there to the one followed by STaB, i.e. develop new villages within claimed areas. Besides, blocks of land cultivated by SPP members were smaller than in Bengkulu. These conditions meant that they had to rely on the strategy of holding important positions such as village head, or chair of the village representative council (BPD, Badan Perwakilan Desa), or other positions in the village government or rural neighbourhood in order to scale up consolidation of SPP groups and other communities at village level. Holding these formal positions at village level was important, at least for SPP, because not all villagers were involved in land occupations.

Nevertheless, the village non-members of SPP were potential opponents. They could easily provoke the authorities to stigmatise members for being part of the communist movement. In both Bengkulu and eastern Priangan, STaB and SPP had experience of this, because in parts of Indonesia a communist-phobia continues, particularly in rural areas. But how should this potential conflict be managed, in addition to conflicts with the authorities and landlords. In this context, a strategy to control some formal positions in village government was significant, because it could give political protection against potential internal conflict among villagers (between SPP members and non members), and against actions by former landholders, that made use of their connections with local authorities.

The SPP also developed 'socio-cultural' approaches to reduce the political stigma of being labelled communist. They developed an organisation whose members could present religious arguments, informed by their Islamic beliefs, as well as populist and formal legal arguments in support of their land occupations. All SPP members were obliged to support religion in addition to showing solidarity with others, show willingness to lead and to learn, according to the 'Nine Obligations of SPP Members'.⁴ The development of cooperative institutions at village level, schools for rural children,⁵ special informal education for women, and many kinds of socio-religious meetings,⁶ were not restricted to members only. SPP activities were open to all members of village society, reflecting not only their strategy to achieve cohesiveness in communal village life, but also reflected an improvement of social capacity.

STaB and SPP were stronger in those rural areas where they were able to consolidate their power, and where members had something concrete to defend. This in turn stimulated more landless or near-to-landless peasant groups to join SPP. Increased membership meant increased political power, for the leadership who could influence policy making processes, and for individual members as well; they became more self-confident as villagers and as citizens. Economically, they began to find ways to improve their livelihoods. As citizens, they began to express their views on what kinds of policies must be implemented at village, district, or national level. They also started to have political influence either in the policy-making arena, or in the control of local institutions even if only at the village level.

⁴ 'The Nine Obligations of SPP' that have to be respected by all members are (1) believe in God and be devout; (2) develop mutual relationships and share work with others (3) have a sense of solidarity with other SPP members as well as all humankind (4) reach consensus democratically in making decisions (5) protect the environment and ecological sustainability (6) struggle for better sustainable livelihoods and social welfare (7) be a wise leader in society; (8) learn, be smart and be a good person, and actively pursue new knowledge (9) struggle for justice (Serikat Petani Pasundan 2006b: 7 and Supriadi *et al.* 2005: 9).

⁵ Today this organisation has formal schools at all levels, from kindergarten, primary to secondary level, although not tertiary level. In these schools they teach about social issues, including land problems, agrarian reform, social analysis, and leadership, as well as the formal subjects required by the curriculum of the national education system. Some local SPP chapters brought these subjects into the traditional Salafie *pesantren*, old-style, traditional, Islamic boarding schools.

⁶ Such as Islamic discussion groups (*kelompok-kelompok pengajian*) and social-religious ceremonies (*selamatan*)

So it is not an exaggeration to say that the collective actions of STaB and SPP also encouraged would be reformers within governmental agencies to be more committed to pro-poor land policies. At the same time, they have produced a number of reformers who have become movement leaders, village officials, local district assembly members, national DPD senators, or office bearers of political parties, as well as intervening in election processes at local and national levels as described above.

Besides implementing these strategies at grassroots level, of course SPP and STaB made attempts to push district land offices (KP, Kantor Pertanahan) to formally recognise the status of occupied land. But in Bengkulu parcels of occupied land have yet to get formal recognition from local land authorities. In North and South Bengkulu Districts, they got consideration from local governments about land occupations, but this depended on how 'close' political relations were between STaB and local power holders. In North Bengkulu, as described above, activists of KBH-Argamakmur and STaB had close relations with the Bupati since they supported his 2005 election, while in South Bengkulu the Bupati approached activists of KBH-Manna and STaB in order to get support for his candidacy in the 2009 local election.

This was why STaB members and organizers were enthusiastic when the Head of BPN visited Bengkulu to conduct an open dialog with them on the 6th of December 2006. In order to get support from peasant movement groups for SBY's National Agrarian Reform Program (PPAN)⁷, Joyo Winoto promised to resolve land conflicts and occupations in Bengkulu. For this purpose he asked STaB organizers to collect data about local land claims. STaB responded quickly to his request, and sent the data to the Provincial Land Agency (Kanwil [Kantor Wilayah] Pertanahan Provinsi) in the same month as Joyo Winoto's request was made. Unfortunately political promises are often uncertain promises, and the Head of BPN never fulfilled his promise to STaB, which made the leaders angry, they said Joyo Winoto was a liar (interview with STaB General Secretary, Bengkulu 26 February 2007 [*no.: B-01*]; and Serikat Tani Bengkulu 2007b).

⁷ About the PPAN see again Chapter II subsection 2.2.3.

Actually the situation in the SPP bases in eastern Priangan was not so different. Only two SPP bases got formal recognition of land they occupied. The Sagara case in Garut District was certified by BPN in 1997, four years before the SPP was formed, while Banjaranyar Village in Ciamis District got their land certificates in 2007.⁸ However the success of pro agrarian reform movements in Indonesia to push the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR, Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat) to produced the MPR Decree on Agrarian Reform in 2001⁹ had a significant impact on the self-confidence of SPP members, in regard to the protection of their occupation actions.

This decree (the TAP MPR No. IX/2001 on Agrarian Reform and Natural Resource Management)¹⁰ had been a focus of advocacy since 1999. At that time the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA), and its members, including peasants organisations such the SPP, saw the formation of the post-Suharto government as a political opportunity to revive the BAL's mandate for agrarian reform (Lucas and Warren 2003 and Bachriadi 2001d). Aside from the debates around the promulgation of this decree (see Chapter VI), it had important consequences for agrarian reform. The TAP MPR IX influenced policy discourses in Indonesia and broadened the discourse on agrarian reform-based development in academic institutions. For an organisation like SPP, this decree was useful to back up their collective land occupations, particularly when under pressure from local authorities:

Yes, we used this decree to say to local authorities that the State is now willing to implement land reform. In fact, many local authorities did not know about this decree, but they respected it – I am not saying they were afraid – of the *Burung Garuda*¹¹ seal printed on the top of the document and the signatures of all the head of the People's Representative Assembly (MPR) at the bottom. We think this decree was very useful and made it easier to expand our land [occupations] and bases (Deputy General

⁸ For both cases see again Chapter VII.

⁹ See Chapter V and VII for social movement efforts and involvement of the SPP and KPA in this advocacy movement.

¹⁰ See Appendix 8 for a copy of this Decree.

¹¹ State seal of the Republic of Indonesia.

Secretary of the SPP at the Annual Reflection Meeting of the SPP, 20 October 2002).¹²

From this perspective, one can understand that collective land occupations conducted by SPP and STaB were an attempt to advance their claims for peasants' rights: claims that were partly based on ideological and/or theoretical arguments about social justice and welfare, but were also mandates of the Constitution and subsequent laws. That is why activists have published campaign materials about collective land occupations which deny that these occupations are grabbing peoples' property, but were a struggle to take back citizens' rights that have been lost.¹³ They also underscored the importance of peasants being organised and united about their land and basic human rights, freedom to organise and freedom of expression.

9.1.2 Autonomous Power of Local Peasant Unions and the Implications of National Movement Coalitions

A strategy of land occupation is not only moving from policy advocacy at the national level to collective action at the local level: 'Agrarian policy changes, in whatever form, will have no meaning if peasants are made to wait forever for their implementation. It will be worse when the new policy is implemented, if peasants get nothing because the land was given to others,' said the general secretary of the SPP (speech at the opening ceremony of the SPORA¹⁴, 5 March 2007). In other words, collective action strategies developed in Bengkulu and Garut-Tasikmalaya-Ciamis region of eastern Priangan lead to a new awareness of the need to make the movement more 'down to the earth' in order to pursue radical social change in rural areas. Besides, the efforts of STaB and SPP to influence policymaking processes were also meant to reduce political stigmatisation and to provide a degree of political protection for members. At the same time it was undisputed that the rural poor, small peasants, and other

¹² He expressed similar beliefs later on several occasions.

¹³ A public discourse on 'land looting' versus 'struggle for land rights' is elaborated in Chapter X.

¹⁴ SPORA (Sekolah Politik untuk Reforma Agraria) or Political School for Agrarian Reform, has conducted political education for peasant leaders in Indonesia initiated by PERGERAKAN, KPA and SPP.

marginalised groups, including women, were able to influence and in some ways determine the direction of the political processes.

SPP and STaB successes with land occupation actions, development of its membership networks and influencing political processes both at local and national levels, created a strongly independent attitude within these two peasant unions, as well as autonomy in various national movement coalitions. They were not controlled by leaders of these national coalitions, especially the various self-claimed national coalitions of peasant movements, even though they had influenced decision making processes within those national coalitions.

In order to implement agrarian reform, SPP activists were involved in advocacy around national land policies and initiatives to develop national peasant organisations (see Chapter VI). Its orientation towards agrarian reform lead this organisation to conclude that the more organisations involved the better, rather than making the agrarian reform movement an exclusive movement. More organisations involve meant developing wider pro-agrarian reform movement networks, which in turn also meant extending the SPP political network itself. That is why SPP was involved in almost all initiatives to build peasant organisations at the national level, such as the formation of FSPI (Indonesian Federation of Peasant Unions), AGRA (Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movements), and API (Alliance of Indonesia Peasants) as well as other pro agrarian reform national coalitions, such as KPA and PERGERAKAN, (Perhimpunan Penggerak Advokasi Kerakyatan).

Another reason to be involved with these initiatives was the reality of leadership competition among the proponents of agrarian reform in Indonesia (see Chapter V and VI). SPP wanted to avoid unnecessary conflicts among these national peasant organisations (focus group discussion, Bandung 14 December 2006). However in a subsequent development, SPP was withdrawn from all national coalitions, because on the one hand SPP leaders concluded that leadership competition could not be stopped and it was confusing for peasants at the grassroots level. On the other hand, SPP leaders considered that these national peasant coalitions had not contributed much to strengthen peasants'

attempts to protect their occupied lands (interview with General Secretary of SPP, Tasikmalaya 23 December 2008 [*no.: P-01*]).

The SPP leadership finally considered that API had no clear vision for agrarian reform, which led to SPP being declared a 'non active member' of API in 2004 (interview with General Secretary of SPP, Bandung 10 April 2008 [*no.: P-01*]). Then SPP withdrew from AGRA in 2006 because they considered AGRA to be too exclusive, led by a small group of activists with no clear peasant base. In fact, on the contrary, the meeting of AGRA's leaders in 2006 decided that members who held double membership, such as SPP, would not be invited to the 2006 national conference, which meant they automatically lost their AGRA membership.

In 2007 SPP withdrew from FSPI because the way it was being reformed (i.e. because of changes in conditions of membership) denied the original purpose of FSPI, and ignored the leadership of existing grass roots struggles.¹⁵ On the one hand, SPP felt that their struggle for identity, autonomy and consolidation at the local level was neglected in this fusion. On the other, they also believed that 'FSPI's largest local peasant member was SPP' (interview with General Secretary of SPP, Bandung 10 April 2008 [*no.: P-01*]; see also Peluso, Afiff and Rachman 2008: 399).

STaB was involved in various initiatives to build a national peasants' coalition and was a member of both FSPI and AGRA in the beginning, but STaB withdrew from FSPI in 1999. This was because of FSPI's intervention in the political education and grassroots organizing in STaB bases which was 'insulting' and 'politically insensitive' to PKBH and STaB leaders.¹⁶ STaB was also not invited to the 2006 AGRA national conference, because it held double-memberships in other national peasant organisations (interview with General Secretary of STaB, Bengkulu 26 February 2007 [*no.: B-01*]). The main interest of STaB and PKBH activists in these national movement coalitions was to develop a network of support for the formation of the new political party, and neither FSPI

¹⁵ See again Chapter VI.

¹⁶ See again Chapter VI.

nor AGRA fulfilled their expectations. Bengkulu activists believed these national coalitions of peasant organisations had no position at all in a political movement for power. As already mentioned above, the Bengkulu collective activists' clique that determined STaB's political orientation, paid no attention to various debates at national level about whether peasant organisations should have a position on agrarian reform or not. They paid serious attention only to movement networks who believed that forming a political party was the best way to influence politics, not just in the Bengkulu region but also at the national level.

STaB and SPP also had concerns about the international campaign and network building being developed by Via Campesina. For instance, SPP considered Via Campesina had made no contribution to empowering rural social movements to assert their land rights, even though this international organisation had an agenda for agrarian justice. In SPP's view, Via Campesina, which in Indonesia was represented by a small group of organizers within FSPI/SPI headquarters (see Chapter VI), was too busy with international meetings and campaigns that made them well known internationally, 'but it cannot provide land for the Indonesian peasants' (General Secretary of the SPP, personal communication, 27 July 2006).

In STaB's view the international campaign on agrarian reform conducted by Via Campesina had made no contribution to the development of political bases in rural Indonesia (former General Secretary of STaB, interviews, 20 March 2007). It seems that that the domination of FSPI/SPI's headquarters, in Via Campesina, caused the activities of this international coalition to be too far removed from local peasant interests as represented by SPP and STaB (see also Bachriadi 2005a).

9.2 SPP and STaB in Electoral and Party Politics

It is clear that the political objective of the Bengkulu collective activists' clique was the struggle for power using their mass based organizations including their 'own' political party namely PPR, which finally failed to qualify as a participant in the 2009 general election. On the contrary, since the beginning SPP

was reluctant to join the PPR initiative in party building, because its leader had predicted these initiatives were not going to succeed. Agustiana, the top leader of SPP, asserted that 'social movement activists have to rethink the form of an alternative political party in Indonesia, especially if the party building aim is to contest elections ... mass-based social movement organizations are fragmented and difficult to consolidate in order to win elections, even to meet the administrative requirement for a new political party to be involved in the election ... time is needed to strengthen the power of mass movement organisations before being involved in electoral politics using their own political party (interview with General Secretary of SPP, Tasikmalaya 23 December 2008 [No.: P-01]).

In order to influence local government policy on land conflict resolution, SPP tried to send its cadres to the local district assembly. In the 2004 national election it carefully calculated in which district SPP cadres could possibly win seats in district assemblies, and concluded SPP cadres in Ciamis District has a better chance than in the other two districts (Garut and Tasikmalaya); finally two SPP cadres got elected by using the PDIP (Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle); while in Garut and Tasikmalaya SPP did not direct members to vote for any parties or their candidates. SPP only had one message to its members: 'vote for whoever you want, but don't destroy SPP consolidation' (interview with Deputy General Secretary of SPP, Bandung 20 July 2008 [no.: P-10]). Whilst in Bengkulu in the 2004 general election, STaB organizers were focused on sending Muspani, the influential leader of the Bengkulu collective activists group to Jakarta as a member of the national DPD and they succeeded.

Too many hopes were raised with these two victories. SPP members in Ciamis expected their cadres could influence local government to recognize all of their occupied land, but until 2009 only one block had been certified (see Chapter VII section 7.1). While in Bengkulu STaB members expected Muspani would influence, or even intervene, in the in Bengkulu provincial government's decision making to meet their demands for recognition of land claims, better rural infrastructure and return of land deeds of the TCCS-Project participants (interviews with General Secretary of STaB, Bengkulu 17 May 2007 [no.: B-01];

with organizer of STaB South Bengkulu District, Manna 21 May 2007 [no.: B-24]; and with Chair of STaB North Bengkulu District, Bengkulu 30 May 2007 [no.: B-30]). Of course as a member of the DPD, Muspani has no capacity to fulfil that expectation. Muspani himself reflected on the 'impotence' of DPD members, both in making legislation at the national level, and in influencing on local government decisions, with his despairing comment: 'DPD is not meant to be the Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, its only the *Dewan Penasehat Doang* or assembly of advisers' (Muspani 2005).

Learning from the 2004 elections, SPP decided not to promote its cadres formally as candidates for district assemblies in 2009, but allowed its members and organizers to be involved in the election independently. However, Agustiana as the central decision maker in SPP expressed his unhappiness about SPP members being candidates in local elections using any political parties (interview with General Secretary of SPP, Tasikmalaya 23 December 2008 [no.: P-01]). Actually he most preferred PDI-P as political vehicle for SPP cadres who wanted to stand for election¹⁷, but not all SPP cadres agreed with him. In the event only 3 of 11 SPP cadres got elected as district assembly (DPRD) members, using various political parties to win votes.¹⁸ SPP members did not deliver on expectations both before and after these individual victories. Based on their experience in the 2004 election, having SPP members in local DPRD had little impact on their attempts to gain recognition of members' land claims (notes on the 2007 SPP annual reflection meeting, 28 December 2007 – 1 January 2008; and interviews with organizers of SPP, Garut 07 September 2007 [no.: P-02], Batang 01 April 2008 [no.: P-06], and Ciamis 13 July 2008 [no.: P-08]).

In Bengkulu, consolidation of STaB bases received a shock following the failure of PPR to get registration for the 2009 election. In fact since 2005 they

¹⁷ Even though Agustiana never said in public that he was a sympathizer of PDI-P, every SPP member knew that their General Secretary had a special political relationship with this party. In fact he was a member of PDI-P's support team for cadres in local district head elections in West Java. In 2007 he coordinated the Garut-based Agus Supriyadi Center set up to support PDI-P's candidate Agus Supriyadi, who won the 2009 election for Bupati of Garut.

¹⁸ Six candidates, including two SPP cadres that were members of Ciamis District Assembly for 2004-2009, used PDI-P; 5 others used PAN, PPP, PKNU (Partai Kebangkitan Nahdlatul Ulama), PKB, and PD (Partai Demokrat). Beside two members of the 2004-2009 Ciamis District Assembly that reelected, only one cadre from Garut won a seat in district parliament on this 2009 general election.

were consolidated and campaigning for STaB and PKBH cadres using this new political party. A couple months after the government announced that PPR had failed to get electoral registration, the clique of Bengkulu collective activists agreed to free all STaB and PKBH cadres to be candidates for district assemblies using all existing political parties. So Bengkulu activists had to get busy and approach other parties, finally 15 were verified as candidates of various small parties,¹⁹ but none got elected.

Meanwhile Muspani who wanted to continue to be a DPD member, tried to reconsolidate the Bengkulu activists, but he was challenged by another senior member of the Bengkulu clique, Babul Hairin. Hairin asked the clique why they only supported Muspani, why not support other candidates this time around. The usually consolidated Bengkulu activists' vote was now split, which led to the fracture of voters' support at the grassroots level. Neither candidate got enough votes to get elected to the DPD for 2009-2014.

The most important consequence of this political struggle within the Bengkulu's activists' clique was confusion amongst STaB members on the ground about movement consolidation and its objectives (interview with former General Secretary of STaB, Palembang 13 May 2010 [*no.: S-11*]). In his reflection, former General Secretary of STaB Agustam Rachman asserted that the Bengkulu's activists' involvement in electoral politics was mostly based on personal interests, rather than in bringing a genuine populist agenda (*agenda kerakyatan*) into institutionalized politics (Rachman 2010: 12).

With PKBH funding for STaB cadres working in local networks drying up after 2008, the political failures of the 2009 national election seriously affected its member organizations as well. Since 2009 local consolidation meetings, advocacy, campaigns and popular education have ceased, which meant that the

¹⁹ There were 2 candidates with the Indonesian Youth Party (PPI, Partai Pemuda Indonesia); 4 with the People Conscience Party (Partai Hanura, Hati Nurani Rakyat); 2 with the Indonesian Entrepreneurs and Workers Party (PPPI, Partai Pengusaha dan Pekerja Indonesia); 2 with the National Democracy Party (PDK, Partai Demokrasi Kebangsaan) and 1 each with the Concerned Nation Functional Party (PKPB, Partai Karya Peduli Bangsa), the Pioneer Party (Partai Pelopor), the Republican Party (Partai Republikan), the Functional Struggle Party (PAKAR PANGAN, Partai Karya Perjuangan), and the Reformation Star Party (PBR, Partai Bintang Reformasi).

Bengkulu peasants' collective struggle organized by STaB has all but ended for the time being.

9.3 Concluding Remarks

The emergence and development of local peasant organizations such as SPP and STAB reflect what has been described as a scaling up process (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 331; Tilly and Tarrow 2007:217), at the same time it was a deepening of the two peasant movements. Through these two case studies, we have shown that the scaling up process partly because of transformation issues arising from their demands for land rights, which turned into demands for agrarian reform, and partly because of the emergence of national coalitions of these movements (as discussed in Chapter V and VI). Scaling up processes occurred at the local level also, as indicated by the spread of movement bases at the grassroots level, scaling up local issues and demands, by intensive involvement of movement groups in institutionalized politics, e.g. in local elections, including elections for district heads ('pilbup' or 'pemilihan bupati'), village heads ('pilkades', 'pemilihan kepada desa'), and the formation of new villages from below within the claimed areas.

At the same time the movement dynamics at the local level, which reflected in the activities of SPP and STaB, also indicated a deepening of the processes of pro agrarian reform and the formation of rural social movements in Indonesia. These processes were characterized by the implementation of land occupations as their main strategy, which gave the movements' roots and an object (land) to defend physically. In this vein SPP and STaB were representing social movements that did not make land a 'campaign issue' only, but threatened to make it a material object to fight over and defend in a concrete way. Collective land claim strategies combined with new political representation at district level, and the creation of new social institutions in rural life, such as new villages and new peasants' schools and cooperatives, have supported their efforts to make their movements deeply rooted in local communities.

From the perspective of the peasantry, the two case studies show that the difficult road of rural democratisation in Indonesia can provide opportunities for marginalised rural people, even within a very narrow space, to create their own way of changing local agrarian conditions, and challenging the government to change unequal landholding structures on State Land. Both movements made the most important object of peasant's interest in Indonesia, namely land, more 'reachable'. This is remarkable, especially when considering the fact that many political organisations, which frequently claim to represent the people's interests, instead only manipulate their so-called political representation.

The two cases studies in this chapter also clearly show how rural social movements were generated and maintained by urban-educated activists, who had their own political interest in these movements at the local level. This is an example of how there was an 'exchange of interests' between the political interests of the activists and the material interests of the peasants (see Migdal 1974, and Skocpol 1994). It was this exchange of activists' and peasants' interests in eastern Priangan and Bengkulu which sustained both SPP and STAB for more than a decade after their formation at the beginning of the reformation era.

The urban-educated activists that controlled SPP and STaB were not questioning the backgrounds of peasants involved in these movements: whether they were peasants for whom land was essential for livelihoods, whether they were landless peasants, or whether they were peasants who were trying to increase their control over land. Both movement organizations had no clear ideological vision about the composition of rural classes, which might have led them to select which peasants should be involved in the movement. Rather for activists in both regions it was about numbers of peasants, the masses, that could represent the movements in their interaction with State power holders and authorities at all levels, and with other social movement activists, which was more important than determining members' class backgrounds.

The case of STaB's decline in the post-2009 election period shows how the process of exchange of interests between activists and peasants broke down,

because the Bengkulu activists' clique could not consolidate their separate political interests into one common interest, in exchange for the peasants' material interests. If individual interests of activists can one day be reconsolidated, maybe STaB can be revived. Again the case of STaB and SPP shows how rural social movements and pro agrarian reform movements are vehicles for urban-educated activists to be involved in politics.