In this paper, more or less successful past social mobilizations for the promotion of agrarian reform laws and their implementation are examined in roughly chronological order, from the early experience of Mexico, Russia, China and Japan to Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia and Zimbabwe. Cases where effective reforms did not come about, such as the Philippines, Brazil and India, are also considered.

Generalizing from the case studies, it seems that a certain level of frustration incites peasants to risk building or joining a peasant organization. Comparison of the different case study areas where important regional or nationwide movements began reveals that they were not the poorest, most marginalized agricultural areas but those where “development” had created growing discrepancies. Another characteristic shared by these areas was that they were not isolated — most of them had access to a city — and were less rigidly traditional and feudal than other areas. They also tended to be densely populated.

The first steps toward peasant organization were often taken by peasants who wanted to solve a specific problem or deal with a concrete grievance. A real impulse was often achieved, however, when those who were in a position to solve the problem or to respond to the grievance were not willing to do so. This forced the peasants to become more aware of their frustration. This rigidity of the powerholders was often motivated by fear that by giving in to requests from below, the status quo would be in danger.

Once a peasant organization had come into existence, a process of consolidation and of gaining strength generally followed. It seems that the availability of charismatic, or solidarity-inspiring, leadership among the peasants was highly important in getting an organization to the point where it could confront elites. Cases of abuse were presented to the courts, and mass demonstrations and public meetings were held to support petitions for justice or land. Continuous frustration, often encountered during the slow course of legal procedure, prepared the ground for more radical peasant action such as peaceful or symbolic occupation or invasion of lands considered to be expropriable.

There is considerable evidence regarding the obstacles to peasant mobilization. Certain strategies used by large landowners, often with state support, to prevent peasants from organizing included the firing of agricultural workers or the eviction of tenants who were potential or actual leaders and who took the initiative to organize their peers. If such actions did not result in preventing an organization from emerging, the assassination of the most important leader(s) has in a number of cases tried to block the organizational process.

In most cases of social mobilization land redistribution was the strongly desired objective. This was especially so in areas where the creation or extension of large latifundios or plantations, through usurpation of land belonging to local or indigenous peasants, had occurred. The more recent the despoliation and usurpation, the more strongly felt was the injustice. It was then generally some form of direct action from the peasants which made it clear beyond doubt to the authorities, as well as to the vested interests and landholding groups, that peasant demands were serious. There are abundant examples where effective reform measures were won by militant peasant organizations through such direct action approaches. This happened frequently with severe risks for social and political stability and occasionally at the cost of many lives, particularly on the side of the peasants.

Recapturating the strategic aspects of peasant mobilization, one could say that initially the means used to present the demands were generally moderate: petitions, lawsuits, and complaints to the courts or the labour inspector. But wherever peasants had some organizing experience or could count on support from people with such experience, more radical demands, such as land reform, emerged. After meeting with the intransigence or even violence of landed elites, an escalation of these demands occurred, generally moderate: petitions, lawsuits, and complaints to the courts or the labour inspector. But wherever peasants had some organizing experience or could count on support from people with such experience, more radical demands, such as land reform, emerged. After meeting with the intransigence or even violence of landed elites, an escalation of these demands occurred, generally accompanied by an escalation of the means used to exert pressure for them. Direct action then became a frequently used approach and land invasions, generally explicit, peaceful and non-violent, were an expression of this. Violence generally came from the landlords' or government's side in this process of escalation. Consistent use of the non-violent strategy thus could bring peasants into political stability and occasionally at the cost of many lives, particularly on the side of the peasants.

Recapturating the strategic aspects of peasant mobilization, one could say that initially the means used to present the demands were generally moderate: petitions, lawsuits, and complaints to the courts or the labour inspector. But wherever peasants had some organizing experience or could count on support from people with such experience, more radical demands, such as land reform, emerged. After meeting with the intransigence or even violence of landed elites, an escalation of these demands occurred, generally accompanied by an escalation of the means used to exert pressure for them. Direct action then became a frequently used approach and land invasions, generally explicit, peaceful and non-violent, were an expression of this. Violence generally came from the landlords' or government's side in this process of escalation. Consistent use of the non-violent strategy thus could bring peasants into political stability and occasionally at the cost of many lives, particularly on the side of the peasants.

Once land reform was effectively being implemented, the role of peasant organizations took various forms. An important function played by peasant organizations in the process of land distribution was to fill the vacuum created by the disappearance of the large landlord as the central figure in or behind the local government and power structure. There were many indications that where a peasant organization participated in the distribution of land and the preceding struggle, post-reform measures and programmes, such as the formation of co-operatives or credit societies, could be carried out more easily. Local leadership had considerable experience both in dealing with official agencies and in harnessing support from the members.

It is remarkable that in the increasingly abundant literature over the years on rural development and on non-governmental...
ABSTRACT This case study is in an effort to demonstrate the disastrous effects of modernization via social mobilization and economic development when initiated from above and through foreign intrusion. Initially, this research will examine previous theoretical literature regarding the political phenomenon of modernization and social mobilization. My primary focus will center on the problems that occur when rapid modernization, based on an exogenous model, is forced onto a traditional society by elites and social mobilization outpaces political institutionalization. My case study will focus on theoretical and political perspectives. What is agrarian reform? The classic definitions of agrarian and land reform belong to the ‘moment’ of developmental states. Political rationales for land reform differ according to varying interests and viewpoints. For many, a prime aim of land reform has been to break landlord power. (2002) forcefully restate the case for redistributive land reform based on the greater productivity of small farming units. Rather than being inefficient because they cannot afford equipment such as tractors, small farms may adopt different techniques of production. This can lead to differences in productivity. Various studies report that peasant women and men are relieved that they have less worry about absolute food security. On peasant mobilization specifically, society-centred approaches often struggle with the issue of why the actions of strong, independent peasant movements have led in many cases not to sustained land redistribution, but to violent retribution by the state and landlords. At the same time, state-centred approaches cannot explain fully why co-opted peasant organizations, often organized by policy elites as part of the state's extended administrative machinery, usually fail to perform even the 'supporting roles' assigned to them. The rest of this article is organized as follows: an