

The Social Empowerment by Enhancing Social Participation in Rural Development.pdf

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SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT BY ENHANCING SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Villages are the key of the development of Indonesia in the future because villages are where the cities get their sources to develop and advance from. However, there are still a large number of disadvantaged villages in Indonesia. Therefore, the participation of the society in the villages is required to equally develop or at least to be connected with urban areas. This research aims to investigate the problems encountered in rural development and the efforts to enhance social participation in rural development.

Key Words: Empowerment, participation, rural development

Introduction

Indonesia is ⁴ an archipelago of which society is spread in both urban and rural areas. According to the data of the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration of the Republic of Indonesia, this country has 74,045 villages and 56,359 out of those villages are classified as disadvantaged and very disadvantaged (Hadi 2015). By 2013, 17.92 million of Indonesian people were considered needy. It has become a huge problem for Indonesian government who wants to establish a justified and prosperous nation in the future.

In the Law Number 6/2014 on Villages, the village is a village and traditional village or called by other names, hereinafter called the Village, is a unit of community that has boundaries with the authority to regulate and manage the affairs of government, the interests of local communities based on community initiatives, the right of the origin, and/or traditional rights recognized and respected in the system of government of the Republic of Indonesia. Although, villages have existed for decades, however, they have not received any specific attention to escalate their advancement. As an area inhabited by most of the Indonesian people, villages are suffering from a huge number of problems. According to Mardijani (2010), the problems faced by the villages are: (1) the society's ability to design their development plan is still quite low, (2) despite the social participation takes the involvement in carrying out the development agenda as the starting point, the participation in the responsibility of the implementation the development revenue management is also low, and (3) the initiative to conduct follow-up activities towards the developed villages through the preservation, utilization, and exertion of infrastructures is rare and difficult to raise. Therefore, social empowerment in the villages is required as one of the components in rural development.

Social empowerment is the attempt to improve social knowledge, attitude, skill, behavior, ability, awareness, as well as source utilization by means of the policies, programs, activities, and assistances according to the essential problems and need priorities of the society. Social empowerment by enhancing social participation in developing their villages is assumed to be able to enhance rural development and eventually, the villages can significantly contribute in the national development.

This article will discuss two problems. The first is how the problems is faced by the villages and the second is how far social participation contributes in the rural development, especially in social welfare advancement.

The Problems Encountered In Rural Development

Most of Indonesian people (approximately 65%) live in the villages. Most of those people depend their living from agricultural sector, such as food crops, plantation, fishery, husbandry, and forestry. The villages become the basis of agriculture while the cities become the basis of industry. The villages are basically described as disadvantaged, less developed, poor, minimally facilitated and educated regions. In the past years, the efforts to overcome those problems were by building infrastructures such as roads, irrigation, border marks, public halls, etc. Rural development is also referred as the shift from traditional mindset into a modern one. Such kind of change in the paradigm of modernization is purposely done to transform the traditional society which is characterized as particularism, ascription, and unspecialized into a modern society which is characterized as universal, achievement-oriented, and specialized (Amien 2005).

From the problems encountered by the villages above, there are at least three essential problems, namely (1) the paradigm of modernization in rural development is still dominant, (2) rural and urban development is difficult to integrate, and (3) social participation in rural development is still low.

The first problem is the dominance of the paradigm of modernization in rural development. The theory of modernization developed in the U.S. as the intellectuals' response towards the World War. Modernization became the most prominent theory invention during the capitalist's milestones under the U.S. command. Modernization became their weapon to hamper the development of socialist ideology which was controlled by the USSR by encouraging and accommodating the socialist scientists to develop the theory of modernization in understanding the Third World (Fakih 2008). The developing Third World was bestowed and even forced to implement the theory of modernization which later on developed into an ideology. Consequently, the U.S. had to give funding to successfully develop the Third World countries. The funding from the U.S. and its allies to the Third World was actually a form of rejection and anxiety towards the development of the socialist ideology.

The influence of modernization in the Third World has widely spread, not only among the scientists, but also among development planner and organizer, and even among religious leaders and NGO leaders. As a movement, modernization has revolutionarily developed from traditional to modern. It is viewed as a westernization where the new world countries have to entirely follow and copy the western model (Suryono 2010). Through the process of modernization, the development ideology applied is growth, efficiency, and competition (Amien, 2005). Modernization has developed into a complex and systematical ideology, a global movement which influence the society's life through a process called homogenization (Fakih, 2008). Modernization in the aspect of economy is characterized by the high rate of consumerism and living standard, technological revolution, greater capital intensity and rational bureaucracy organization (Abraham 1991).

Through the process of homogenization, the society in the Third World is required to adopt modern characteristics or values in order to support the development. Those modern characteristics are the infatuation to absorb new ideas, try new methods, the willingness to speak up, sensitivity of time (focusing on present and future instead of past), time punctuation, efficiency, materialism, the reliance on knowledge and technology as well as the confidence on equal justice (Weiner 1994). Negative matters, such as fatalism, laziness, slackness, and improvidence, are considered as the characteristics of traditionalism which needs to eradicate to avoid hampering the development performance.

Some theorists of modernization and development, such as W.W. Rostow, David McClelland, Chenery, and Albert Waterson have formulated some strategies which are considered as valid on the perspective of modernization. Rostow's ideas had ever influenced the ideas of development planner in the Third World. According to Rostow, modernization was a designed social change as part of the evolution process from traditional to modern (Fakih 2008). Rostow's theory of growth is known as the five-stage scheme. All societies including the western society have experienced such kind of evolution. Social changes in those five stages of growth are traditional society, pre-conditions for take-off, the take-off stage, drive to maturity, and finally the stage of high mass consumption as the idealized modern society. Under the reign of Soeharto, Indonesian government implemented this theory in their long-term development plan called the first and the second long-term development which were detailed in the five-year development plan.

McClelland is best known for his theory of the need for achievement (N'ach). This theory states that every person has a set of drive or motivation to work better, not for prestige but personal satisfaction instead. A person or a society who owns N'ach will work harder and learn faster. This N'ach virus is assumed to be absent in the traditional societies who mostly inhabit the Third World countries. N'ach is believed to be correlated with the economic growth of a country. The higher the achievement motive of the society, the higher their economic growth will be.

Chenery, in line with the theory of modernization, introduced an approach which is known as redirecting investment. The idea is a reaction towards the wider gap between the poor and the rich as the impact of the economic-based development process. Chenery suggested to revise the paradigm by stressing on the role of the capital formation. In order to raise the status of the poor, they have to be prepared to have sufficient capital to satisfy their basic needs. The development which up until now is centralized on the capital current has to be changed into an investment which is directly connected to the poor, such as the improvement of the access for education, health and credit. In Indonesia, this theory has been adopted under the reign of Soeharto, Habibie, Gus Dur, Megawati, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono until Joko Widodo who is now being the president of Indonesia.

Albert Waterson, who studied rural economic approach, assumed that the top down approach towards development would not succeed in satisfying the social need of the poor in the villages (Fakih 2008). The strategies which focus on agricultural development are viewed to be beneficial for those who are able to buy agricultural input such as qualified seeds, fertilizer, pesticide, and insecticide. The green revolution developed under the reign of Soekarno in the New Order precisely benefited the rich. Therefore, Waterson recommended 6 elements which are essential for the success of post soil distribution rural development, namely (1) labor works production, (2) the use of human resource surplus using small unit of infrastruc-

tures, (3) the use of human resources in light farming industry, (4) the production of intermediate products for agricultural products and light consumption products from the local raw materials, (5) self-reliance and independence encouraged by governmental organizations who have the authority outside the departments who are in charge of the programs, (6) regional planning with the hierarchy of development center to bridge the gap between the villages and the cities (Fakih 2008).

Modernization in development is generally assumed as industrialization. Development in the form of industrialization is designed and controlled by the government's regime expecting that the society will follow. This imitating pattern causes development homogeneity in capital fertilizing as an effective way to generate optimal output (Hettne 2001). Capitalism develops as the main current in the development of the Third World which is strictly dictated by the First World countries under the U.S. command. Obviously, not all the Third World countries are able to perform the development. As the impact, several countries are suffering from the crisis and the number of the poor is escalating. The gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider because modernization, industrialization and capitalism are basically created to benefit the capitalists.

The second problem is the difficulty to integrate the rural and urban development. Ideally, villages should be connected to the cities, not only physically, but also socially, economically, politically and culturally. However, it is not easy considering the misperception about the villages and the cities. According to the urban society's mindset, villages are exemplified as fatuous, poor, and less educated; on the other hand, according to the rural society's mindset, cities are exemplified as full of knowledge, entertainment, jobs and dangerous (Jamaludin 2015).

The cities, because of their advances, have attracted a lot of people from the villages to swarm over the cities. This urbanization occurs due to several factors, namely the advancement in agriculture, industrialization, market potentials, service, transportation, social and cultural appeal, and education (Rustiadi, Sunsun Saefulhakim, and Dyah R. Panuju 2009).

Urbanization in the Third World countries happened massively and rapidly. The activities of these people are supposed to enhance the development of their original villages. As a matter of fact, a lot of people do not want to go back to their villages because of the difficulty to find job in the village not to mention the low salary they will get if any. Hence, the development in the villages is hampered due to lack of human resources who want to sacrifice for the development of their villages. Although there are any, they possibly do not have sufficient technological skills required to develop their villages.

Aside from those problems, small and medium cities which should have functioned to serve the rural areas have not developed the center for agricultural commodity market, center of production, distribution of products and services, center of small and medium business development, as well as the provider of alternative jobs (non-agricultural jobs).

The interconnecting system between the villages and the cities should have been built, especially after a country is inspired by modernization, industrialization, and capitalism. Instead of developing their villages by expanding physical, social, and economic network to the cities, as a matter of fact, the villages have not got much benefit. The development agenda to integrate rural development into urban development results on the situation where cities take control over the villages instead which causes the net current of capital and transfer of sources decrease rural potentials to develop (Rustiadi, Sunsun Saefulhakim, dan Dyah R. Panuju 2009).

Poverty and backwardness in a lot of villages in Indonesia is not only caused by their isolation from the cities, but also due to the impact of the form and system of interconnection between the cities and the villages which tend to lead to an exploitative relation. The other cause of the backwardness of the villages is the villages are stuck in the specialization of a single agricultural commodity or natural resource to serve the cities (Armstrong in McGee as quoted by Rustiadi, Sunsun Saefulhakim, and Dyah R. Panuju 2009). The exploitative relationship of the cities over the villages is in line with the paradigm of the theory of dependence which explains that the metropolitans in the developing countries which have high dependence on the economic system of the northern countries (Rustiadi, Sunsun Saefulhakim, and Dyah R. Panuju 2009). Surplus transfer from the southern countries is carried out through the connection between the main cities (metropolitans) with the advanced industrial countries in the northern world countries. The metropolitans work like the agents of the industrial interest of the developed countries. Those developed countries actively exploited agrarian countries or taking the surplus from the villages. Poverty and backwardness in the villages are the scenario from the agents of global economy. International work allotment which is dictated by the developed countries has generated the difference of the added value and the spin off has caused poverty and backwardness in the developing countries, especially in the villages and rural areas (Amien 2005).

The third problem which becomes the burden in the rural development is the social participation is still low. The development activities in the villages are mostly designed by the rural government, in this case is the leader of the village. Although there is any, the participation is limited to the involvement of the

village representative board (BPD) in the village budget arrangement. The members of BPD are frequently selected from the relatives of the leader of the village, thus they tend to play as the stamp for the policies made by the leaders of the village. Meanwhile, the members of the society in the village are less involved in composing, carrying out, and evaluating the policies and the development programs in the village. Their participation is limited to the mobilization they do carrying out some particular short-term programs. This participation is certainly not classified as the village society empowerment.

Low-participating villages usually suffer from a number of problems, causing the respective villages less developed than the other villages. For instance, the low level of education of the society, less clean water supply and electricity, bad infrastructures, difficult access to the district and subdistrict office as well as high rate of poverty. Eventually, it reduces the social participation in all stages of rural development.

THE EXCALATION OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Development programs will not be successful by depending only on the government's willingness. The same problem goes to the rural development which is not sufficient to be designed and carried out by the leader of the village and their apparatus, but also more importantly the participation of the society in the village is required in order to make the rural development be efficient and beneficial in improving the society's welfare. Social participation is the key point of the success in carrying out the rural development. Participation is important in the development process for two reasons. First, social involvement is required to collaborate top-down and bottom-up model in order to get the development program accepted and serve the society's need. Second, participation becomes the social motivation tool to grow the sense of belonging and sense of responsibility towards the implementation and the results of the development (Suryono 2010).

Participation is defined as a person's involvement in a social group to take part in the social activities other than what they do for living (Mardikanto and Poerwoko Soebiato 2013). The participation occurs due to social interaction in the society. Participation or involvement of an individual or a society in the development is viewed as (1) the involvement in decision making, (2) the involvement in supervision, (3) involvement where the society can get benefit and reward, (4) participation as the empowerment process, (5) participation as a partnership activity, and (6) participation as the impact of the influence of the influential figures in the process of decision making, supervision, and utilization of the resource to bring benefit to the society (Anwas 2013).

Mardikanto and Poerwoko Soebiato (2013) postulated four types of participation activities. The first is participation in the process of decision making. The decision has so far always been initiated by the government through its agents. This decision making has made the society become more apathetic. In order to build sense of belonging in the society, the decision making process concerning to their social life needs to directly involve their participation. The second is participation in carrying out the activities. This type of participation tends to be understood as the poor society voluntarily devote their energy in the development activities. Meanwhile, the benefit from the development is more impactful to the upper-class society. Therefore, it requires a change of paradigm in which social involvement means an even distribution of social contribution in the form of human resources, cash, or any other kind of contribution which is equal to the results that the society will receive. The third is the participation in development monitoring and evaluation. This monitoring and evaluation program is required to attain the purpose of development. In addition, it is important to get feedback on the problems appear in the development so that they can immediately be solved. In this participation, the society has to collect information related to the progress of development program. The fourth is participation in utilizing the development results. This participation is an essential element because the development programs aim to improve social welfare. Thus, the society has to be the first to enjoy the development results, instead of the government's agents. It is in line with the perspective of Asngari (2001) (in Anwas 2013) which states that basically people will voluntarily take part in a program or activity if (1) they realize that they will get benefit or satisfaction both economically and non-economically, (2) they completely understand what the activities mean to the society.

One of the most important indicator in the empowerment is the quantity and quality of social participation in the development (Anwas 2013). Participation means involvement. However, not all participation can be classified as empowerment. Empowerment is assumed as the existence of autonomy or freedom of the actors to act voluntarily. Empowerment avoids the means of coercion (Anwas 2013). As matter of fact, social participation can be compulsively created by other party without the society knowing why they are participating. This social involvement cannot be classified as social empowerment.

It is not easy to improve social participation. However, there are several strategies to enhance social participation, namely (1) the formation of social organization which supports government's programs and rural development, (2) infrastructure improvement in the villages, (3) the distribution of social aid towards the needy society, (4) the distribution of economic incentive to the achieving society, and (5) the provision of job opportunities in the villages.

Social organization and local economy occupy the central position and role in generating social participation. The existence of BPD is not sufficient to accommodate the society's aspiration to develop their villages. It requires the diversification of social economic organizations which are able to encourage active involvement from the rural society, for example local economy empowerment through small business groups in the villages, youth organization empowerment, traditional arts and sports group empowerment, integrated medical facility empowerment, regular meeting group empowerment, etc.

In terms of infrastructure, the villages are far left behind the cities. In Indonesia, there are still a lot of less developed villages because of depraved roads, disconnection to the cities, and isolation from information access which results on poverty and backwardness. One of the best ways to solve this problem is by building infrastructures in the village. Jokowi's government shows high awareness on this problem as reflected in one of *nawacita* (nine ideas) program, namely improving the connectivity through the provision of transportation and connection infrastructure in the villages and transmigrant areas (Hadi 2005). This infrastructure development which applies high technology use is maintained by the Ministry of Public Works. In this case, social involvement is limited as informal supervisors. On the other hand, in labor intensive projects such as building the bridge, improving water infrastructure, building garbage management center, and other labor intensive projects, the society in the villages can be involved from the process of planning until monitoring and evaluation. Their voluntary involvement is an essential part of social empowerment.

Among the society in the villages, there are a number of family who live under poverty. There are still a number of disadvantaged villages in Indonesia. The Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration of the Republic of Indonesia noted that a number of 31,323 or 40.61% villages in Indonesia are less developed from the total of 77,126 villages (Hadi 2015). This huge number of disadvantaged villages proves that there are still a lot of Indonesian people who live under poverty line. In Central Java, the 2014 data showed that these needy societies were concentrated in the villages by 59.78% (Central Java Government 2014). The poverty depth index in the villages was 2.592 and the poverty severity index in the villages was 0.660 higher than in the cities. This forces the government of Central Java province to perform their commitment in eradicating poverty in Central Java.

The government's policy to eradicate poverty through Indonesian Health Card and Indonesian Smart Card is an effective way to improve the less developed society's life into a more advanced and prosperous life. They are also given the other types of social aid, such as rice for the needy, cash aid, and capital aid for small business units as the effective strategies to enhance social participation. Those well-treated and respected society will in turn give response by voluntarily giving their participation in the development program.

Although villages are seen as less developed areas than the cities, it does not mean that the villages do not have figures who succeed in developing their villages. A lot of creativity and innovation have emerged in the villages instead. Managing their farm by giving impact to the natural preservation while supporting sustainable development are the realization of the farmer's innovation and achievement. A lot of craftsmen also perform their innovation in developing their business, for example, batik artisans, wood gravers, gemstone artisans, *keris* artisans, and other craftsmen show positive performance which deserves to be awarded. There are also a number of pioneers in various fields who deserve to be awarded for developing their villages. Therefore, those people are supposed to be rewarded equal to the achievement they have made for the sake of the development in their villages.

Lastly, another attempt to enhance social participation in rural development is by providing more job opportunities in the villages. The provision of economic facilities which support the expansion of job opportunities in the villages, such as factory building, real estate building for the society, dam building, and center of recreation building will open more work place. It will provide a wider working opportunities for the people in the villages. The policies and programs on job opportunities will be optimally used by the society. They will fully participate in rural development because the jobs are already available in their villages. It will reduce the urbanization current of the rural society to the cities all at once.

Closing

Along with the development which occurs in the villages, rural society development is an urgent need that requires the government's attention although in the next decades, the cities are assumed to develop more rapidly and attract more people from the villages to the cities.

The government should apply the policies to encourage the villages to develop themselves in order to bring beneficial impacts to their society. Their economic basis should be improved through integrated rural development. While encouraging them to be independent, the villages need to be facilitated by increasing the farmer's income through fertilizer subsidy and machine aid, developing non-agricultural works, and improving the village society's welfare by creating more job opportunities in the villages,

providing health and education service, and building sufficient infrastructures such as road, dam, water supply, and electricity. Thus, social participation in rural development will keep on enhancing.

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