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## The Need for Revitalizing Democratic Politics through Culture- Context Deliberation: A Note on Participatory Development in Indonesia

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### **Abstract:**

*Democratic theories either participatory or representative have been revitalized by most current theory of deliberative democracy. Many less developed nations in Asia and Africa have found it hard to create a working democracy in their respective countries as a result of adopting or adapting modern democratic values and institutions. This has been caused crucially by the drawback of its respected theories, along with presence of distorted democracy imposed by domination of global corporatism, such a situation has been made worse by the main stream of universalists' approach to the study of political development that assumes that modern western democracies would work when transplanted elsewhere outside western nations. By employing theoretical perspective of deliberative democracy that puts culture in significant place is politics, we find more promising position to understand new path of democratization. The paper makes an account of deliberation practices experienced in the governance of participatory development in Indonesia. It is our finding that deliberation has been lacking and gives negative impacts on legitimacy by larger public. The recommendation is to introduce more deliberative mechanism that is very likely to contribute to improving procedure in participatory development in the country.*

**Keywords:** Participatory development, Musrenbang, deliberation, local democracy, Indonesia

### **1. Introduction**

Participatory development mandated in Indonesia in the year 1999 law presumes the presence of democratic politics. However, to what extent has democracy been employed? The fact that there has been a great number of citizens participate in development planning does not really resemble real participation if deliberation has not taken place. Such deficit participation seems to be caused by two structured reasons-one is the procedure of public involvement that give little room for intense engagement and the other is the presence of political brokers in the regions.

Though early years of reform resulted promising improvement in democracy and good governance through the decentralization and regional autonomy, these results were then decayed in later years by the emergence of what Agustino & Yusoff (2009) called political brokers-who are mostly former players in New Order times, thus giving negative impacts on participation (Agustino & Yusoff, 2009:19-20).

The 2004 law in regional governance even gives wider room for the society to be involved in policy formulation than that of the 1999 law. "... maka konteks otonomi daerah memberikan ruang partisipasi publik seluas-luasnya bagi masyarakat untuk turut serta dalam mengambil kebijakan di tingkat lokal" ("...therefore in the context of regional autonomy, the law provides wide room for the citizens to be engaged in public policy in the regions") (Hamidi, 2011; 338-339).

What may have been missing in participatory development in Indonesia is the fact that (a) public involvement in the planning stage has not emphasized on quality and deliberation of bottom-up planning; and (b) control by "representation" of the society has been very little especially at the stage of public policy formulation (in the framework meeting of the local government of RAPERDA or Rapat Peraturan Daerah). Such a loop hole gives room for mismatching of products of bottom-up process and those of top down process. The paper is an account of participatory development in Indonesia using the perspective of deliberative democracy. Among empirical data gathered by a number of studies on this matter, analysis will be made using meta-analysis method.

### **2. Method**

The research employs qualitative method in which data are gathered from documents and research findings presented in journals available at the Google Scholars. Concepts and features of deliberative democracy theory (DDT) are used both in the description of data and in the analysis. A number of data and concepts found in the data are gradually

categorized. Using meta-analyses method, the data and findings available are analyzed. Triangulation will be applied in the analysis. The following are the indicators in DDT that will be used as parameters of the analysis: (a) talking-centric (b) public spiritedness, (c) larger segments involvement, (d) levels/capacity to deliberate, (e) capability of negotiating interests, (f) capability of negotiating interests, (g) features of interpersonal & leisure interaction, and (h) State-responsiveness

### 3. Literature Review

The most current discourse on democracy has centered on theory and strategies for deepening and revitalizing democratic politics. The contemporary theory of democracy has been deliberative democracy theory (DDT). The theory is considered by such theorists as Cohen, Masbridge, and Amy Guttmann "superior on normative and practical grounds to constitutionalism, adversary democracy, representative democracy and other aggregative collective decision-making procedures" (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006; 590). DDT is gaining wide acceptance, including three (3) large-scale trials in the city of Eugene, Oregon, in the city of Sacramento, California, and the city of Fort Collins, Colorado in the US, with what Weeks identified as four strength features of deliberative democracy—large public participation, informed public judgment, opportunities for deliberation, and credible results" (Edwards C. Weeks. 2000; 361-362). Still in the U.S. context where there existed deficit trend in political participation, research interest had increased in the issues of public deliberation and citizen engagement. The studies were specially reported in the 2004 Annual Review and the 2008 Annual Review (Harringer, 2010; 8). The crucial point in a democratic politics is legitimacy. To advocates of DDT, "the essence of democratic legitimacy is the capacity of those affected by a collective decision to deliberate in the production of that decision. Deliberation involves discussion in which individuals are amenable to scrutinizing and changing their preference in light of persuasion (but not manipulation, deception, or coercion) from other participants" (Dryzek & List, 2003;3). In culture-context deliberation, Indonesia's 1945 Constitution has had its deliberative democracy in its tradition sense, although in practice in consecutive governments there have been mal-practices (Zamharir & Lubis, 2015).

DDT is most welcome especially by its advocates, including the acceptance of this theoretical perspective by activists in the efforts of re-interpreting and re-living local knowledge and adat-based deliberation practices of Hibua Lamo in North Halmahera, Indonesia (Nanuru, 2011). In the framework of this theory, the significance of participatory development that incorporates indigenous values becomes promising. As shown in Saefullah study, the uses of such local values of adat-leaders as pakraman in Bali, to promote Credit Union, Lumbung Pitih Nagari (literally means the village's pot of money) in West Sumatera, to promote microfinance program at nagari (village) level, and gintingan in Jawa, to administer shares of rice collected on a regular basis when a villager has events as marriage and building a home (Saefullah, 2018). Both DDT and the incorporation of local values can eventually generate self-confidence and innovation among the local people to be self-developing in their economic well-being. Even in time of severe crises, like economic blockage, such things as innovation, uses of local resources and local knowledge become significant (Kumar, 2017).

Though the development of Deliberative Democratic Theory (DDT) has currently been in progress—including the incorporation of other disciplines like psychology into DDT that presents the construct of morality dimensions in deliberation; or the claim that there has emerged Type 2 DDT that revises the Habermasian's DDT (or Type 1), it is our proposition that Habermas's grand theory remains the paramount. It is Jurgen Habermas that developed the grand theory of public sphere and its subsequent conception of deliberative democracy—a shift from the bourgeois democracy that he found in earlier stage of capitalism. Exploring the nature of fair competition stage in the capitalist society in the West, Habermas came to naming the mode of democracy the bourgeois democracy written in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Habermas, 1991). In this earlier work dealing with bourgeois society, Habermas (in Nasrullah, 2012; 28) conceptualized the framework to describe the society in the context of free fight Capitalism as follows: First, in the private realm, there are actors that go into (1) civil society—which "realm of commodity exchange and social labor"—and (2) bourgeois intellectuals. Along with this, (3) there are public sphere in three sub-realms; i.e. (a) the political realm, (b) the world of letters (clubs and press), and (c) market of culture products. Second, sphere of public authority, consisting of state realm of the "police" and courts or "courtly-noble society". From the above categories, Habermas was trying to show some sort of classes in the society and its consequences of the absence of equality in public discourse.

As the capitalist society in Germany and France transformed into the later stage of monopolistic nature of more contemporary capitalism, not only was Habermas's concerned with democracy, but also with much broader themes—norms and laws. His book that now becomes his magnum corpus of DDT is *Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Unlike his counterparts of the Critical Theory like Horkheimer and Gramsci—who mostly sees the reality within the critical frame of seeing the world, Habermas has been more adopting brighter look at seeing it. Habermas in this later book explored the emergence of more equitable society—while the classes and boundaries remain to exist, but such classes and boundaries were "by-passed" by new and equal public sphere (Habermas, 1996). Quoting Schuler & Day, Jati (2016) summarizes the essence of the concept of Habermas's public sphere: there are three domains, i.e. (1) public as arena, where public arena is provided for the society to communicate freer among and across classes; (2) public sphere as all-people itself—it is the public being the key stakeholders who play the role in exercising democracy coming from the "grass-roots"; and (3) public sphere is an agent or intermediary for expressing aspirations from below (Jati, 2016). In democratic theory, Habermas's DDT has been described by many scholars as the theory that functions as deepening and revitalizing democracy, especially after representative democracy has been badly implemented.

Democracy by way of deliberation is meant that it is the larger segments of the society are involved in discussing public issues oriented towards alternatives ideas and arriving at compromise, putting the interests of the society the top priority, with humble attitude and reason (Cohen & Joel, 2013). In addition, DDT's features include (1) public spiritedness whereby individual preferences are not advisable, but rather views are oriented to the interests of the public; (2) a shift from voting-centric to talking-centric, through which choices are made after thoughtful ideas are discussed, putting aside majoritarian opinions; and (3) state's good response that expects state government to endorse the chosen decision (Zamharir & Lubis, 2012).

#### 4. Results & Discussion

Data and research findings collected and reconstructed can be divided into two (2) main categories—one category concerns with institutional framework and regulatory instruments made available by both central and local governments, and the other one deals with implementation involving the public. We begin with institutional framework and regulatory instruments in participatory development. The process of participatory development planning are as follows: (1) SWOT analysis of the region's, (2) vision and missions' formulation along with statement of objective and major activities, (3) choice of strategies, (4) planning detailed activities along with budgeting, and (5) implementation that involve monitoring and evaluation (Asri Lubis. 2009, 188).

Beginning with first and second steps (SWOT analysis of the regions and the subsequent setting forth of the vision and missions, the regulation rests on the top-down approach. Within the objective, and selecting strategies guided by the government, citizens are engaged in planning sessions. This is bottom-up step. Final choice of detailed plans is handled by the local government while taking into accounts plans discussed by the citizens. The final policy formulation is processed within the government mechanism (both the local government and local MPs) with little room for civil society to involve in it.

##### 4.1. Government Regulation Concerning Participatory Development

In the meantime, promise of public involvement is found in the regulation of development planning stipulated on the Government Regulation or Peraturan Pemerintah No 8 Tahun 2008 along with ministerial regulation or Permendagri No 54 Tahun 2008, where participatory development is translated mostly into the mechanism of MUSRENBANG or musyawarah perencanaan pembangunan (literally means deliberation on development planning), beginning at the Kelurahan or Village level, then proceeds to Musrenbang at the sub-districts or Kecamatan level and on to the city or district level. The mechanism of MUSRENBANG has been organized by the local governments and invitation to participate in the deliberation is sent to local stakeholders. Budget that includes consumption for the participants is allocated. At the final stage of musrenbang in the districts or municipal cities, it is the responsibility of Bappeda or Bureau of Regional Development Planning within the local governments to coordinate and assemble the results of all musrenbang in the respective regions.

It is worth noting to understand two different mechanism development planning: (1) regular development planning (RDP), and (2) participatory development planning (PDP). RDP is similar to PDP in its procedure that includes musrenbang. The difference is that in regular planning, involvement of citizens is not done, whereas in participatory planning, more people including women, the poor, informal leaders are involved. This study focuses on the PDP.

##### 4.2. Implementation

A study by Muzaqqi is intended to investigate the extent of the impact of musrenbang on local democracy and the degree of consolidation on the part of the society. Special attention is given to the assessment of the implementation of the above regulation—assessing the extent of the engineering function on the regulations in making the society more consolidated in deliberative democracy sense (Muzaqqi, 2013; 93)

As far as procedure of the event of musrenbang is concerned, Bastian (2008) has listed two steps—preparation stage and actual meeting. It is interesting to note that Bastian's listing reflects very good procedure in involving the provision of sufficient pieces of information necessary for deliberation. All these inputs are what TDD requires to ensure the good quality of deliberation. However, as Bastian noted, the result turned to be unlike the expected: based on Bastian observation "...the weakness of implemented musrenbang is similar to the one at the village/kelurahan level, i.e. the problem of representativeness and concordance of citizens' aspirations". Bastian further stated that "...the problem of representativeness often time occurs in such forums, thus giving the negative impact of domination on the part of village/kelurahan elites..." (Bastian, 2008).

It is also indicative that there have been bad practices in the stage of budgeting (submission of Raperda APBD to the legislative body, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah). That final program prepared in the Raperda APBD does not reflect the consensus processes beforehand. "the interests of citizens in turn becomes marginalized; instead only function of justifying the revision or to be downgraded to the interests of some segments or individuals")

In practice, the mechanism of musrenbang has not achieved meaningful participation. In several regions the following are some indicative points reflecting poor quality of deliberation. In West Java, a study taking the case study at Sub-district of Cibadak of Sukabumi by Purnamasari (2008) identifies some weaknesses in the musrenbang sessions: citizen involvement was disrupted among others as a consequence of lack of priorities (in several villages) that should be made, no further follow-up when results of musrenbang at sub-district level passes on to the district Sukabumi level. It was also Purnamasari's finding that in villages of Warnajati, Sukasirna, Pamuruyan and sub-district of Cibadak, the priority

programs in the respective localities were done by village/sub-district heads, apparatus, and LPMD without citizen's involvement (Purnamasari, 2008).

A study by Supriyadi (2012,31-39) finds that while the procedure has successfully conformed to the government decree of (25/2005), the finding shows the weaknesses to achieve good quality of participation. Since no significant involvement of citizens, there emerges its consequence that many aspirations collected from the villages fail to be accepted either by the local bureaucrats or by DPRD (The People's Council at the local level).

In Yogyakarta Special Region, Sugiarto's study at District Sleman focused on participatory budgeting. Again, the finding by Sugiarto is similar to those by the two studies mention earlier, i.e. lack of participation of the citizen. also it was found that political party whose ideology is pro-poor was not supportive to the need for absorbing the interests of the poor ... though the dominant political party in power claims to possess pro-poor ideology of Marhaenism—(Marxist's proletariat that is revised by Soekarno to fit the poor in Indonesian context—HZ), such ideological position turns out to fail to endorse the local government to exercise the power by seriously implementing public involvement in their policy making) (Sugiarto, 2010).

In East Java, two case studies on the subjects are worth mentioning. A study by Wijayanti et. al. (2013) on performance-based budgeting at Pasuruan District has found that citizens' plans have not conformed to the government's development program. Public involvement in development planning worked out by Pasuruan District in 2012 is based more on top-down approach. Citizens' aspiration and priorities are to be conformed to the local government performance and are meant for reaching the long-term goals already set forth.

In Pontianak (West Kalimantan) RTH Program (Ruang Terbuka Hijau or a space for greening the city) was launched, with stakeholders to be active in supporting the greening of the city. A study by Filani (2013, August) indicates that both government apparatus in the city and communities are not yet pro-active in the greening the city. On the government side, "no policy has yet been made to bind the action of citizens...causing poor management of RTH..." On the citizens' side, the weaknesses also occur "the citizens have not participated in the program; they, instead, rest on the choice of what they do not prefer and this has led to limited knowledge about the importance of RTH". This is very likely a negative impact of little awareness of eco-development—an approach that has been well-promoted among others by Vandana Shiva's social movement of Earth Democracy that has been widely accepted among global communities (Zamharir, 2015, July).

#### 4.3. *The Role of Voluntary Associations*

Under the existing framework and regular mechanism, Society has NOT been fortunate: MPs in the regions should be controlled. The executive in the local governments should also be controlled. But all these do not exist. To fill this gap, the role of comparatively active voluntary associations or civil society organizations (CSO) in improving local governance is required. UNDP defines that CSOs "are made of freely and formally associating individuals pursuing nonprofit purposes in religious bodies, recreation clubs, professional associations, action committees, unions, social movement and so on" (Sudarmo, 2010, 142). The crucial position of voluntary associations is that civil society has only been in infancy. There seems to be a simultaneous task of voluntary associations—both making their associations more powerful internally and also exerting efforts of struggling for attaining the demands and interests of the public in their respective regions. This is so given several weaknesses exist on the part of civil society in general. An example is presented in Praja's study that reveals the evidence of some weaknesses of non-government organization in local governance at Grobogan District, East Java: profit motif, lack of fund on the part of NGOs, "weak" ideology to take affirmative action for the poor, and professionalism. (Praja, 2009). As far as the increased number of CSO it is something that is promising. The data shows a drastic increase of CSO from about 10.000 agencies in 1999, i.e. one year after 1998 political reform in the country to approximately 20.000 in the following year (Harsanto, 2012; 3). With their presence, Harsanto observes that there is an increasing need for the behavior of the local governments to be more corrective and to promote partnership. The presence of CSO is called for given the fact as the following situation: In public health sector, public participation is hindered by central government's implicit ideology, perceiving the service as private goods; and by misconception of local governments' authorities that base the services more on affordability rather than on affirmation to the poor" (Sam Foster Halabi, 2009).

The significance of the presence of CSO is illustrated in the following case study. An intervention project to empower level of participation affirms the call to the presence of civil society. Such affirmation was made by Pratiwi (2012) studying participatory planning in Gunung Kidul District and Bantul District in Yogyakarta Special Region. Pratiwi described a success story of intervention activity by voluntary association called REWANG, as follows "the outcome of our intervention project has made a noteworthy achievement and brought with it some lessons: some efforts to improve planning and budgeting mechanism and procedure require that there should be segments of citizens who are active and organized citizens, possessing capacity in terms of sufficient knowledge and skills, and who are keen on choosing sound strategies for educating citizens" (Pratiwi, 2012; 35).

From the above-mentioned description and account, there is a key issue of the agenda, i.e. the need for improving or developing the institutional framework and regulatory instrument for participatory development. Recommendation to gradually improve institutional framework for participatory development is one way of structural transformation. The framework of musrenbang mechanism would require shorter periods of sessions because currently long-stage of sessions starting from village level to city/district takes comparatively long process. This would call for revision of regulatory instruments. Second, involvement of larger segments of the society as conceptualized within deliberative democracy should be installed. Currently huge number of participants are considered good public participation. In fact, several

persons would not voice the interests of a particular segment; the proposals are more of personal interests. For example, several farmers producing export-oriented products may voice different views so that no common interests are voiced. From empirical evidence presented in several studies on participatory development planning, we note that several weaknesses of existing participatory development planning have occurred. The weaknesses include (a) the preparedness of the participants, (b) the digestion of agenda, (c) little deliberation, and (d) ambiguity of bottom-up and top-down approach adopted. And the negative impacts on quality of development planning then take place—assurance of quality of products becomes problematic. The following description of identified problems in the existing musrenbang is follows: First, in the existing musrenbang, any citizens without prior commitment are involved. This is very likely problematic. It is necessary that participant make a commitment prior to participation. Secondly, very little time is allotted for deliberation—during one day meeting, about two hours remains for discussion. There should be ample time to digest the issue(s) discussed. Thirdly, discussing the issues with only little deliberation. There should provide mode of thoughtful discussion. Fourthly, the approach is more top-down in the early stage of participatory planning; then bottom-up in the later stages but little control by the public at the final stage. Finally, in terms of assurance of quality of products (results of musrenbang), there emerges disruption of proposals formulated by citizens because some do not match the targets set forth by local governments. Follow-up involvement should take place at the final stage.

Context-culture deliberation is likely to take place when civic virtues of a given ethnic groups contribute to democratic politics in the locality. Its function is to deepen local democracy in the sense that dominant ethnic groups also share their common interests with larger groups of the society. Though culture is not explicitly mentioned in the cases under study is expected to come up when deliberation begins to take place. Since the early beginning of musrenbang, request for commitment as prescribed by TDD, communication making use of local values would be more fruitful for trust building and thereby the presence of firm commitment. If there is a shift from participatory democracy to deliberative one, the process of discussion and deliberation would be much more promising and productive. A few cases in this practice of a kind of deliberative democracy in Indonesia are at hand. East Java's governor has made a breakthrough of existing participatory democracy by way of organizing informal discourse and dialog with the political leaders. This informal meeting with the CEO of political parties in the region is claimed to have gained some success in that when formal meetings are held, less conflicts take place and negotiations have had the way to come to an agreement in formulating public policy and programs (Soekarwo, 2014). This governor claims that his idea of informal consensus is rooted in civic virtues of social piety generated from the mixture of religious values prevailing in the society and culture. As is often complained by many segments of the society, currently Indonesia's democracy has yet achieved its consolidated democracy as described by Christian (2010), consolidated democracy implies stable growth in institutionalized rule of the game. In the context of local politics, consolidated democracy may gradually exist if such breakthrough in East Java can be adapted elsewhere in other regions. CSO's role as indicated in one study described in the past paragraph becomes crucial in improving real participation. So far government officers need to be "intervened" by active non-government activists to ensure better development planning in the regions. More than intervention, however, better institutional framework for participatory development involving non-government activists seem demanding very badly. With the spirit of mutual help based on cultural values it is expected that development planning can present viable public policy that gain wider acceptance by the society.

## 5. Conclusion

There has been comparatively poor quality of products resulted in participatory development planning. While public involvement has been intensified, little discussions or deliberation has existed thus giving negative impacts on real participation. Implicit in musrenbang mechanism seems to adoption of participatory democracy that has not achieved better sense of public involvement in formulation of several public policies across Indonesia. Deliberative democracy so far has not been in practice. The dual modality of procedure of planning, i.e. bottom-up as well as top-down seems to create problems as shown in the fact that when planning at the highest level (at the district or municipal city) lack of public involvement has taken place—thus giving larger room for the formulation uncontrollable by the public.

There has been indicative of fruitful impacts on better public policy when some active CSOs are involved. There has also been breakthrough of formal political sessions to formulate public policies by informal deliberative negotiations that give positive impacts on public policy formulation that gain larger legitimacy politically. Both the presence of CSOs and the breakthrough could contribute to betterment of participatory development planning. Though only a few cases, culture-context deliberation could be considered for future modality to insure both fruitful improvement of quality of the planning and attainment of public legitimacy.

Future research in the area would require both studies on the normative level of government regulation to look into the inherent drawback of musrenbang mechanism and empirical studies on the roles of CSOs in regional development. The limitations of the present research seem to include the fact that the data are of secondary data that are taken for granted for the purpose of meta-analysis process. First-hand data are not provided.\*\*\*

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