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Towards Deliberative Ideals with Informality: A Practical Study of Rural Planning in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on a specific discussion regarding how rural planning in Indonesia can provide an understanding of deliberative planning practice. It contributes to the literature related to deliberative planning in a non-western rural context. Primary data were collected from interviews with 23 respondents in Pematang Tengah village, Indonesia. Secondary data, consisting of scientific literature, research reports, and internet sources, were used, as well. Observations were conducted to reveal the way development projects are practically proposed in hamlet and village forums. Different stages of the process were identified and it was concluded that two deliberative mechanisms were used, more precisely directed deliberation and disjointed deliberation. Directed deliberation is an open dialogue that is overseen by all stakeholders. Alternatively, disjointed deliberation is conducted in a separate, informal arena and it is initiated by the local elites. The findings show that the disjointed deliberation in the informal arena can disturb the deliberative ideals, but it can also help to make the formal deliberation successful and fulfil the deliberative ideals.

1. INTRODUCTION

Village planning is a notion that continues to evolve, especially in efforts to involve the community in the decision-making process (Castro-Arce and Vanclay, 2020; Wong et al., 2017). Deliberative planning theory was originally developed for the urban context (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2003) as a procedural theory (Faludi, 1973) in support of the deliberative ideals (Habermas, 1990; Mansbridge et al., 2010; Mäntysalo and Jarenko, 2014), but later it

has also been used to analyse procedural issues in rural planning (Beza, 2016; Johansen and Chandler, 2015). It has mostly been studied in a western context, or the global north (Bafarasat and Baker, 2016; Chen, 2017; Sisto et al., 2018). However, the planning literature lacks empirical studies to test this theory in developing countries, especially in the global South - an issue that is addressed in this study.

As a developing country in the global south, Indonesia has a significant task in developing its territory, not only urban but also rural. Currently, rural

areas are the main concern in Indonesia's regional development policy. Indonesia has conducted fiscal decentralisation to the village level since 2015, when the Village Fund Programme was launched. Village governments receive sufficient financial support to develop their territory based on community initiatives.

The Village Fund Programme has been studied from various perspectives, such as governance and institution (Afifah, 2017; Djuwityastuti and Astuti, 2018; Luthfi et al., 2017; Mamelo et al., 2016; Watts et al., 2019; Yusuf et al., 2019), economic (Arifin et al., 2020; Artino et al., 2019; Chalil, 2020; Kurniawati et al., 2018; Widodo, 2017), and participatory (Daraba, 2017; Tumbel, 2017). Yet, only few investigations have been conducted specifically on the deliberative aspect of its implementation. Hence, the research question arises as to how does Village Fund implementation in Indonesia provide an understanding of deliberative planning practice? This article contributes to a better understanding of the notion of deliberation in the planning literature, especially in the context of developing countries in the global South.

The Village Fund provides villagers with flexibility in proposing development projects according to the outcome of village-planning deliberation. They elaborate development projects based on dialogue in various arenas and stages. This study investigated village-planning deliberation practice through field research, using a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014). This study also helps planners in dealing with planning of rural settings, where both informal and formal arenas play a certain role.

This study is organised into the following sections: sub-section 2.1 presents the literature review as the theoretical basis for this study; sub-section 2.2 explains how the data were collected and analysed; sub-section 2.3 describes the Village Fund policy and a relevant case to test the theoretical assumptions; sub-section 3.1 describes the results of our analysis of the empirical data; sub-section 3.2 discusses the relationship between the findings and literature discussed in the introduction and the previously discussed theories; section 4 reveals a summary of the results.

2. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Supporting theory

The topic of this article is deliberative planning theory. It is based on the theory of deliberative democracy, which was first adopted in planning through the communicative planning theory (Healey, 1992; Mäntysalo and Jarenko, 2014; Sager, 1993). As a decision-making tool (Davidoff and Reiner, 1962; Friedmann, 2003), deliberative planning is performed through communicative action (Habermas, 1990),

involving stakeholders who influence the end decision-makers. They have dialogues in the policy-making arena to achieve a win-win solution. Although this sounds utopian (Flyvbjerg, 2003a), at least the decisions made through this process have legitimacy (Legacy, 2012).

In deliberation, consensus is the basis for decision-making (Habermas 1984) argues that communication is not just a medium for conveying information; but a tool that also triggers action. He argues that communication aims to achieve mutual understanding. To make this happen, the involved actors have to fulfil several prerequisites, i.e., following the logical-semantic rules of argumentation and the rules of jurisdiction and relevance in a situation of openness of speech and freedom from constraint and coercion (Habermas, 1990, pp. 87-89). Based on these arguments it can be concluded that deliberation provides space for the community to solve public issues through communication as a dialogue between the actors involved to exchange ideas and reach consensus. It will lead to a good policy if it meets the prerequisites for an ideal deliberation in practice. The policy is a collective agreement because of the consensus reached.

"Communicative planning theory follows deliberative democracy theory", where the aim is to reach consensus, but recent more pragmatic theorists see deliberation outcomes as legitimate, "even when the parties advocate their own interests in intense negotiations" (Mäntysalo and Jarenko, 2014). Deliberation is a deliberative democracy practice that pursues the deliberative ideals of symmetric power, openness, honesty, equal opportunity to influence the process, non-coerciveness, and opinion protection (Mansbridge et al., 2010). In deliberative planning, the role of the planner - who is called 'deliberative practitioner' (Forester, 1999) or 'deliberative bureaucrat' Puustinen et al., 2017) - shifts from technocrat to facilitator (Taufiq, 2020). The deliberative democracy mechanism in the planning context requires good enough diversity, interdependence, and authentic dialogue (DIAD) network dynamics.

Most of the deliberative planning theory was generated in studies conducted in the Western context. According to Baxamusa (2008), deliberation empowers the community because it reveals the impact participants feel from policy options. The community's involvement guarantees legitimacy because the resulting policies have emerged from the stakeholders' minds (Legacy, 2012). Moreover, deliberation is influenced by power and negotiation practice (Flyvbjerg, 2003b; Forester, 1987). Deliberation makes power relations visible; everyone debates in public, without using too much pressure or conspicuous negotiations (Johansen and Chandler, 2015). However, it is possible that powerful actors advance their interests against other participants that remain silent (Chen, 2017).

In the Western context, formality in deliberation tends to be safeguarded. More attention is paid to the public sphere, to how dialogue and negotiations occur, to the role of the planner and to the formal power mechanisms (Booher and Innes, 2002; Forester, 2013; Johansen and Chandler, 2015). However, this is different in the global South, where informality significantly affects planning (Banks et al., 2020; BIRTHAL et al., 2017; Hilson et al., 2014). The existing studies on deliberative planning are not representative of its practice in the global South, apart from some that were focused on the subject of participation (Martin and Rutagarama, 2012). Hence, their conclusions may not be compatible with planning in the global South, where it is not just about participation, but also about art in dialogue. Hence, it is important to investigate deliberative planning in practice in the global South context.

2.2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014) based on the assumption that investigation of deliberative planning should focus on uncovering people's experiences related to policy issues (Hudson et al., 1979, p. 389). The investigations describe and analyse social activities regarding attitudes, perceptions and thoughts of people, individually or in groups (Neuman, 2014). Because it should describe and develop the subjective meaning of social experiences, this study used social constructivism based on the assumption that individuals always try to understand the world they live and work in (Creswell, 2014, p. 8).

The research involved the exploration of processes, activities and events. Here, according to Creswell (2014, p. 187), two types of research can be applied, namely grounded theory and a case study. First, this research reached a theoretical understanding of how planning deliberation occurs in practice, for which grounded theory was chosen as the most suitable strategy; we adopted the systematic steps for building grounded theory proposed by Charmaz (2014, p.18). Second, a case study was conducted in Pematang Tengah village, Pematang Jaya sub-district, Langkat district, Indonesia, where deliberation practice was observed in village-planning forums (in Bahasa Indonesia: *Musyawarah Pembangunan Desa* or *Musrenbangdes*), with locals having dialogue to devise development projects.

The first author has worked in the Aru Bay area, one of the development areas in Langkat district, covering Pematang Tengah village, as a deliberative bureaucrat from 2008 until 2017. This experience was useful in data collection and analysis. Because of his relatively good level of closeness to the respondents, they were not hesitant in providing information. Also, it

helped the authors to interpret the responses. Alternatively, triangulation was used as a method to test the validity of the results and to ensure that they were free from subjectivity, specifically considering that one of the authors is an ex-village official. The data sources and data collection methods were triangulated. The first involved the selection of a variety of respondents to minimise the researcher's preconceptions, while the second involved the use of various data collection techniques to minimize the respondents' subjective biases.

In the field research, interviews, observation and document analysis were conducted to collect data in July 2018, June 2019 and August 2020. Using open-ended questions, 23 persons were interviewed from three groups of respondents, i.e. ten villagers, seven members of the village government, four members of the sub-district government, and two members of the district government. The deliberation process was observed and field notes were taken to record important things. Formal and informal conversations in community meetings were observed. The annual village development meetings in 2018 and 2020 were attended and several hamlet-level community meetings in 2020, which were organised in hamlet stalls, posts and other public spaces. Also, government and other institutional reports, scientific articles and the Internet were used as sources of supporting information.

Constant comparison was used while analysing the data. Briefly, interview statements between different people were compared and synthesised into one concept. The concept was then compared with the results of other respondents' statements. This process was continued until a higher conceptual level was reached, namely, the abstract concept or understanding that we offer in this article.

2.3. Village Fund policy in Indonesia and a rural planning case

This section briefly explains Village Fund policy in Indonesia and an illustrative case reflecting the deliberative practice. The Indonesian government has taken an ambitious step to accelerate rural development as the main concern of regional planning policy by introducing the Village Fund programme. Through Law No. 6 of 2014, it has conducted fiscal decentralization on the village level Widodo (2017). Every year, village governments receive sufficient funding they are allowed to control autonomously. Since this policy was first implemented in 2015, the total amount spent was of at least 269.7 trillion IDR (15.7 million EUR) (lokadata.id, 2019). In 2020, 72 trillion IDR (4.2 million EUR) was budgeted (Ministry of Home Affairs in Nugraheny, 2020), i.e., 3% of state expenditure (Putri, 2019). This policy is directed at improving rural infrastructure and economic and social

facilities. Each year, the choice of the development projects is made on the basis of village deliberation.

This policy has undoubtedly brought considerable benefits to Indonesian villagers (Kurniawati et al., 2018). The focus is physical development and activities that provide direct economic benefits based on initiatives of community members, as proposers, decision-makers and workers (Djuwityastuti and Astuti, 2018; Luthfi et al., 2017; Watts et al., 2019). At the national scale, the Village Fund has provided for 191,600 km of village roads, 58,000 irrigation units, 8,983 village market units, 1,140,378 m of bridges, 8,983 village enterprise units, 959,569 clean water facility units, 240,587 public bathing, washing and toilet facility units, 9,692 village maternity posts, 50,854 pre-primary schools, 24,820 integrated health posts and 29,557,922 drainage units (Haryanti, 2019).

Village-owned enterprises funded by the Village Fund improve the economy of rural communities through independence in doing business (Arifin, et al., 2020). The villages promote accountability, participation and transparency in managing their finances (Mamelo et al., 2016; Yusuf et al., 2019). However, some have criticized this policy, thinking that it reduces village independence (Afifah, 2017) and human resource capability and increases inefficiency (Chalil, 2020; Mamelo et al., 2016). The Village Fund programme has reduced poverty (Artino et al., 2019) and it has increased villagers' participation in proposing development projects (Daraba, 2017), involving them in debates to identify problems and potentials and make village-planning decisions (Tumbel 2017). This study examined specific issues in this process to provide a better understanding of the deliberative planning practice.

2.4. Illustrative case: Deliberation in Pematang Tengah village

Pematang Tengah village was selected as a case study to observe the deliberative democracy mechanism in practice. The village is located in the Pematang Jaya sub-district, Langkat district, North Sumatra province, Indonesia. One of the authors has worked there as an ad interim village head (2015-2016) and a sub-district secretary of Pematang Jaya (2014-2017). The authors used their experience to understand the local culture, relations and tensions in conducting deliberation. In 2019, this village was inhabited by 2,260 residents. Its area covers 2,400 ha, a combination of coastal and plantation areas. Residents are generally planters, farmers and fishers. At the coast, this village is located around Aru Bay, an area directly opposite the Malacca Strait. This region had great potential in the past, being located on the sea route of the Silk Road connecting Europe and Asia (Fig. 1). Pematang Tengah village is a remote village with no direct public

transport leading up to the village. Visitors usually use private vehicles on land or sea routes to reach the intended go-to place. Most of the village roads are gravel roads. In the rainy season it is difficult to cross the village without disturbing the villagers' activities. Educational institutions such as primary schools and junior high schools are limited. Education at the senior high school level is not available in the area; parents who want their children to benefit from a higher formal education must send them elsewhere. People have a high sense of caring, which can be seen from a culture of cooperation and mutual respect among fellow residents (Suwignyo, 2019).

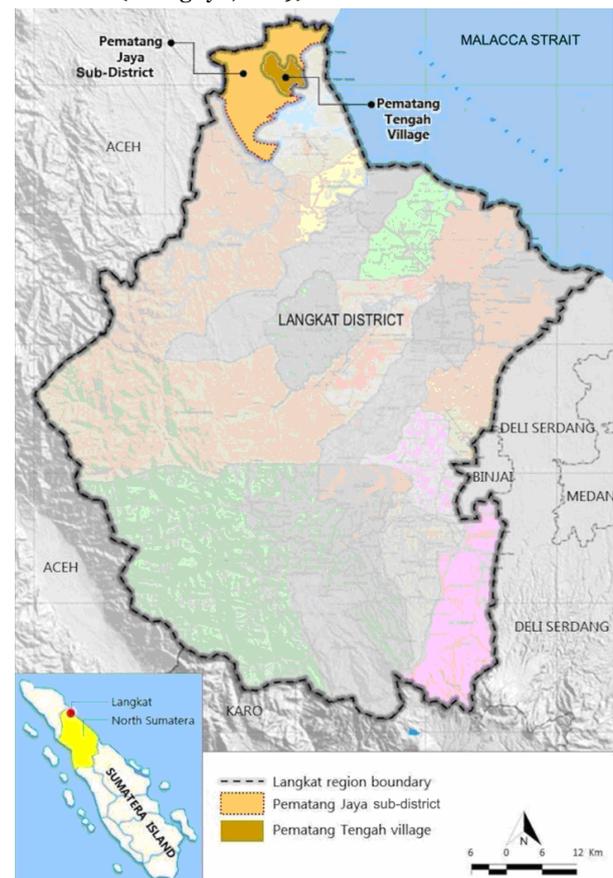


Fig. 1. Map of Pematang Tengah village.

Within five years of Village Fund implementation, various development projects have been implemented in the village, mainly focus on the rehabilitation and construction of village roads, farm roads, road paving, bridges, a pre-primary school building, concrete trenches and rebates, clean water facilities, a business training course, agricultural seed assistance, livestock assistance, and village-owned enterprises. The development projects were decided through village deliberation in several stages, starting at the hamlet level. This led this study to involve more micro-knowledge in reviewing the deliberative process. As this study explored the deliberative process, we do not explain the implementation of the Village Funds (Luthfi et al., 2017) conducted in Pematang Tengah

village in detail, but focus on the local deliberation practice.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In devising development projects the villagers conduct two types of deliberation. The first is directed deliberation, while the second is disjointed deliberation. This section examines both and their relationships in their attempts to achieve the deliberative ideals.

3.1. Directed deliberation

The annual village development meeting organised to elaborate development projects reflects the notion of directed deliberation. This deliberation occurs at the village government office in a semi indoor public space (in Bahasa Indonesia: *balai desa*). The villagers are invited to attend the meeting by the hamlet heads, who pass on the invitation to the villagers in their territory. Each hamlet is represented by several people at the meeting at the village level. Ideally, ten to twenty people from each hamlet attend the forum. However, the level of attendance showed that, on average, each hamlet sent only five to ten people as representatives. Thus, in total, up to seventy people attended the annual meetings at the village level (70% from the initial estimate).

Thus, the participants at this deliberation are representatives of the residents in each hamlet. The village head invites the representatives using an official letter distributed by the hamlet head. This meeting involves not only residents but also organisational groups such as the youth group and the women group. Apart from villagers and the village government, this meeting is also attended by representatives from the sub-district and district. They act as deliberative bureaucrats to facilitate the deliberation process, but not as a decision-makers.

“District and sub-district government representatives are involved in the annual meeting. This is necessary to facilitate deliberation. We contribute with expert knowledge so that the proposed recommendations do not violate the rules.” (Interview with a sub-district government officer, August 2020).

This village development meeting is held once a year, usually in July or August. The participants choose development projects among all proposals using a priority scale. Projects that heighten people’s welfare are prioritised, namely, village roads and educational facilities that are still inexistent in the village. This meeting gets the most attention from the villagers. Here, they practice openness, in which dialogue and power relations, can be observed clearly.

“We hold an annual village-level meeting, which is attended by representatives from all hamlets. There, they argue to defend the proposed development projects from each hamlet. This practice is open

because the participants can monitor each other.” (Interview with a village government officer, June 2019).

The meetings go off smoothly, accompanied by conducive negotiations and little debate. Each hamlet representative submits the proposals of a development project agreed on at the hamlet level, without any interference. We observed that the proposed ideas were conveyed by a representative without being overly criticised. We identified this practice as directed deliberation, where the process was directed by several actors. We identified that this practice reflects collaborative policymaking (Innes and Booher 2003), invited space, and visible forms of power (Gaventa, 2006).



Fig. 2. Directed deliberation in annual meeting for village development (Pematang Tengah, 2020).

The group of leaders consisting of the village head, sub-district representatives and village assistants position themselves in front of the audience. Also, a security force consisting of police members and soldiers is present on site. In general, the questions asked by the community are answered by the village head, the village government representative and the main meeting leader (Fig. 2A). The questions address issues ranging from the proposed ideas for development projects to critical comments on the development management. The villagers use their right to ask questions extensively, without being burdened with interference from any party. They stand when expressing their

opinion (Fig. 2B). However, they need sufficient courage to speak in front of the forum.

“We negotiate by considering social norms. We consider community leaders as role models that can provide the best ideas for the village’s progress. They propose development projects that are supported by most villagers.” (Interview with a villager, July 2018).

Community leaders such as the hamlet head or some older villagers are highly respected. The village culture encourages high respect for the community leaders, who represent at least 30% of the participants. Their communicated messages are considered by most villagers. Thus, they achieve the deliberative ideals (Habermas, 1990; Mansbridge et al., 2010). Although planning deliberation was originally developed for the urban context (Booher and Innes, 2002; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Forester, 1982), it has turned out to be compatible with rural planning, as well. As power relations affect the deliberation process, the planner must make an extra effort (Forester 1987, 1999).

The deliberative ideal is utopian in the urban context, where there is a great deal of emphasis on formal deliberation as the initial medium for negotiation. Directed deliberation, on the other hand, involves various stakeholders. The village government leads the course of the deliberations. They ensure that the deliberation runs smoothly, without quarrels among villagers. They also provide advice based on a sense of brotherhood. They act decisively by prioritising development projects that can be agreed on by many people rather than those that are supported only by specific individuals or groups.

Sub-district government representatives and village assistants act as facilitators. They oversee the course of the deliberation and convey the main priorities of Village Fund usage. They ensure that the proposed development projects do not violate the regulations announced by the national government every year. Also, they provide information about several policies incidentally included in the budget outside of the annual priorities, such as the continuation of the construction of village roads from the previous year, overcoming the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and overcoming childhood stunting syndrome.

In the case under analysis, the youth group proposed to build sports and economic facilities and a village market and to organise activities to stimulate creativity, such as making brown sugar from sap trees. The presence of youths made the deliberation more enthusiastic and dynamic. Much useful local knowledge was obtained from them because of their wider associations. Although some youths are also community leaders, they appreciate the role of the older community leaders in the dialogue. Sometimes, the comments of the youths were quite critical towards village development management conducted by the village

government. They are agents of change both in planning, helping with the estimation of funding needed for any physical project (budget plan), and as workers in project implementation. The authors did not find serious issues regarding youth participation in this deliberation. At least 40% of the deliberation participants were youths and some hamlet heads were also youth leaders.

The women group proposed development projects that would support the household economy. In this village, even though their husbands are employed (with a sufficient income or not), a homemaker’s desire to improve her household economy is considerable. They are eager to propose training courses to improve more skills such as knitting, sewing, and also set up microbusinesses. They submitted these proposals through female representatives. In the deliberation, they are free to express their opinions and do not hesitate to voice their complaints regarding village development. Yet, women’s participation in attending the annual village meetings needs to be improved, since only around 15% of the participants were female. However, this does not mean that the women group is passive since they put also forward their wishes at informal meetings such as the weekly social gathering for women villagers every Friday afternoon. Since, increasing women’s participation is one of the village government’s concerns, they proposed that, in the future, each hamlet should have female representatives present at the village meetings.

3.2. Disjointed deliberation

To explain the quite fluent deliberation in the formal arena, this section will outline how the deliberative ideals are tackled/fulfilled in the policy-making arena driven by the informal arena. The annual village-planning deliberation is preceded by deliberation at the hamlet level. Each hamlet conducts unscheduled deliberations in different locations. This informal arena is organised by various groups, such as youths, women, community leaders, and particular interest groups. This study identified each leader from these groups as local elites.

“We provide flexibility for the villagers in each hamlet to conduct deliberation at the hamlet level. Generally, this practice is not scheduled and organised by community leaders in each group. They propose it through the hamlet head, who follows the annual village-development meeting.” (Interview with a village government officer, June 2019).

There they devise development project proposals to be presented at the village level and their representatives prepare to defend the proposals at the next decision-making level. They use several places, including villager’s houses, stalls and hamlet posts. Generally, this happens on an unscheduled basis. These

informal deliberations can take various forms, such as community meetings, social gatherings and religious gatherings (Fig. 3). At the beginning of the village deliberation process, a scheduled deliberation is carried out in every hamlet. However, in 2018, these deliberations were less coordinated and more disjointed.

“Informal meetings make the community more enthusiastic to propose development projects. It can occur in several places, such as people’s homes, stalls and other public places. We see this as a practice to increase community participation in development.” (Field notes, August 2020).

However, it appears that these informal practices are not completely inefficient. Local elites can organise public interests quite well with authentic reasons for proposing development projects (Innes and Booher, 2003). There are several reasons why the local elites are in a good position to coordinate this process. Apart from cultural reasons, they have the power to gather people around them, due to their prestige, property ownership and experiential knowledge.



Fig. 3. Disjointed deliberation in an informal environment (Pematang Tengah, 2018).

The disjointed deliberation occurs in public places such as stalls, where they interact with each other during a break from agricultural activities or accidental meetings (Fig. 3A). While enjoying a drink, they have a dialogue about the village’s development, what they can propose, and what criticism might be in their hearts. This informal arena naturally arises in a

society that upholds the value of togetherness, as individuality is not held in high regard in the village community. On the other hand, they also have dialogue at the hamlet post to discuss community life development (Fig. 3B). Usually, these activities are not scheduled but announced by word of mouth. Here, groups of men and women can discuss broader issues. They can complain about the village road that is still mostly hardened soil and express their desire to improve the micro-economy.

“Community leaders initiate meetings in the informal arena. Usually, they prepare several proposals according to shared interests, such as village roads, road paving and bridges. Our goal in holding informal meetings is to ensure that the proposals submitted to the annual forum are discussed first. There is coordination between interest groups in the informal arena. Hence, there is little debate and negotiation in the formal arena” (Interview with a villager, July 2020).

The disjointed deliberation represents closed space and hidden or invisible forms of power (Gaventa, 2006). Does this help in realising the deliberative ideals? This is debatable. Most villagers support local elite’s suggestions since they are the leaders of each group in the village community, usually the community leader benefitting from the support of individuals. The farmers group leader and the fishermen group leader have support because they pay attention to their members’ interests. The women group leader has prestige among their members; she will be the representative to propose the women group’s aspirations in meetings at the hamlet and the village level. Also, a landowner is one of the local elites who people from the community consult with and has significant influence, especially on his workers and business partners. Likewise, the youth group leader, who gathers the younger generation’s aspirations and is involved in village development. Hence, it is difficult to tell whether these suggestions serve private interests or those of the whole community. The disjointed deliberation is a foundation that supports deliberative planning in several ways, such as development projects emphasising general welfare. However, it can also be an obstacle to inclusiveness if it ignores interests that do not serve the whole community or minorities (Flyvbjerg, 2003a).

Invisible power impacts social inclusiveness when cultural values are formed (Chouinard and Milley, 2016; Howard and Vajda, 2016; Pickering-Saqq, 2019), driven by the socialisation of norms, values and attitudes in family and society through patriarchy and even through structural violence (Gaventa and Martorano, 2016; Mehta, 2016; Pettit, 2016; Pettit and Mejia Acosta, 2014). Although life seems significantly improved, the dynamics of power causing to poverty and inequality are still ongoing, such as invisible power

perpetuating injustice and expanding inequality (Rowlands, 2016; Scott-Villiers and Oosterom, 2016). Likewise, regulatory failures that occur, result from hidden and invisible forms of power (Chisholm et al., 2020).

Attention has been paid to power relations in deliberative planning in the urban planning context, but nowadays it is also present at the village level, triggered by heterogeneity and plurality. The disjointed deliberation is why network power in deliberation is not formed when participants have dialogue not only in the formal arena, but also long before it takes place. This eventually establishes power relations that are more evenly distributed in the formal arena. Critical negotiations are carried out in the informal arena. When the annual meeting takes place, it reflects what has been agreed upon in the informal arena. This situation is different from what is conveyed in most literature in the western context, where formal deliberation to generate ideas, learning and decision-making is safeguarded (Beza, 2016; Booher and Innes, 2002; Mäntysalo and Jarenko, 2014). This study showed that the formal arena presents results from deliberations at the informal level.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This article aims to provide an understanding of deliberative planning practice in a non-western rural context with Pematang Tengah village, Indonesia as a case study. Two types of deliberation that affect this were identified, i.e., directed deliberation and disjointed deliberation. Directed deliberation is an open dialogue that is overseen by all stakeholders. Meanwhile, disjointed deliberation occurs in a separate informal arena, initiated by local elites. Although disjointed deliberations can disturb the deliberative ideals, when local elites try promoting their personal interests, they can also support the villagers' wishes and lead to improved living circumstances.

The case study clearly showed that deliberative planning should pay attention to the emergence of local aspirations through the informal arena in the deliberation process. The informal arena is part of the decision-making process. Even though the number of participants in the annual village planning meeting at the village level (*Musrenbangdes*) was lower than expected, the projects proposed by the hamlet representatives were genuinely based on the villagers' wishes obtained through informal discussions. Thus, both directed deliberation and disjointed deliberation do not work independently, but shape a complex framework towards the deliberative ideals.

We argue that the deliberative ideals in the formal deliberation arena are not realised through formal dialogue as it happens in the western context. The case showed that the informal arena helps to

achieve the deliberative ideals in the formal arena. A large role of informality in planning is a characteristic of deliberation in the global south and third world countries.

In theory, deliberation leads to decisions supported by all stakeholders, realising the deliberative ideals (Habermas, 1990; Mansbridge et al., 2010). However, in practice, this process is often disturbed by influential developers and landowners who bypass the formal deliberative forum to gain what they want (Mäntysalo and Jarenko, 2014). Hence, this concept is utopian in the western urban context. However, the case study discussed in this article showed that it is compatible with planning deliberation practice in a non-western rural context. This was identified from the disjointed deliberation in the informal arena that smoothened negotiations in the directed deliberation, thus achieving the deliberative ideals. As a recommendation for future research, the difference in the way power works in the formal and the informal arena should be further investigated.

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