

Reviews on Theories and Practices of Modernization: Rural Experience in Indonesia

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Abstract— Development is a "founding belief" in the modern world. It is one of the most popular buzz words in the human civilization. However, it has no exact meaning of development, no accepted definition. Development is "user-friendly," it means whatever one wants or needs it to mean. Similarly, development theories are also different, which depend on their "political positions," their "philosophical origins," "place and time of construction," and their "scientific orientation." One of the most well-known theories in development theories is modernization theory. It is the "dominant philosophy" and "mainstream school of scholarship" in social science. It discusses economic, social and political development issues in the developed and the Third World countries. It shaped the strategy of many countries in designing their development planning. It also became the dominant paradigm for many years, even up to now. However, many critiques have been faced by this popular theory, logically and practically. Rural life has also been the area of this development paradigm for years. From "purely" top down to "faithful" participative approaches have been implied in the area. This paper will critically review modernization theories' point of view in conceptualizing development and reflect rural Indonesian life in accordance with this development philosophy. Moreover, this article will concisely describe a reflection regarding this development model about understanding and interpreting development. □

Keywords— *modernization, rural development*

I. INTRODUCTION

Rural development has been one of the main concerns in Indonesia, consider that most of the Indonesian areas are still rural, and a lot of people in Indonesia still live in rural areas. It is very clear that population tendency in Indonesia has shifted from rural to urban life. However, rural life is still very important, in particular, related to issues of development equity and poverty alleviation.

Concern towards rural development has increased significantly especially in the recent years when "Rural Act" ("Undang-undang Desa") Number 6/2014 has been officially declared to be implemented in Indonesia. It was a very noteworthy achievement since "half-hearted" support from previous governments to develop rural areas, which were

reflected in Act Number 5/1979, Act Number 22/1999 and Act Number 32/2004. Instead of developing people to be self-reliance and prosper, they have created high people dependency to external interventions.

The development process is a choice. Even though for some reasons, it was insisted due to several reasons, colonialization for example. However, every single country may choose their ways and style to increase their people quality of life. Colonialization can be existing in a lot of forms; it is not always a physical colonialization, it can be economic, socio-cultural, and even in the state of mind. Indonesian rural development has potential to be much better as a result of the implementation of the rural act. It is our choice to decide which approach to be implemented to realize rural people welfare.

This paper is a mix of a literature review as well as observation and contemplation towards the rural situation. It will concisely describe rural development (in particular agriculture sector) in Indonesia and its situations due to the implementation of dominant development paradigm in the rural development process, which is modernization theory. Following criticizing theories such as dependency, the world system, and globalization theories have not been involved in this discussion. The discussion will be started with a review of modernization theories as dominant approaches used in Indonesian development.

II. MODERNIZATION THEORIES

Modernization theories are based on an important idea, namely the concept of "traditional" and "modern" society. In these theories' view, traditional is "stagnant and unchanging", has "spiritual values", "particularism", "functional diffuseness" and "effective roles". On the contrary, modern is "rational", "efficient", "forward-looking", "committed to growth and improvement", "universalism", "functional specialty" and "affective neutrality".

Variations are acknowledged in these theories, namely the theory stressing on capital supply for investment as Harrod-Domar's theory; theories emphasizing on individual

psychology, such as McClelland's n-Ach; theories emphasizing on cultural values, such as the Weber's Protestant Ethics; theories emphasizing the important present of social and political entities which encourage the development processes, such as Rostow's theory and Hoselitz's theory; and theories which stress on material environment, such as Inkeles and Smith's theory. There is a variety of approaches in modernization theory, but the central idea remains that the task before the world is the transforming of traditional societies.

Based on its development, modernization theories have several strengths. *First*, it assists to understand the difference between West and East paradigm in conceptualization development. Modernization theories are very "Eurocentric." On the other hand, development process in East countries is different, at philosophical origins, place and time. It is ahistorical to make these two paradigms the same. *Second*, modernization theories explain the background of activities of "modern" countries in relation to their counterparts in "traditional" countries. According to Isbister (2003), modernization theories' view is not without its "moral imperatives" for the rich. If the developing (poor) countries are to modernize, it is important that the rich countries assist and nurture them. The underlying paradigm of "nurturing" traditional countries, as the process to become "modern," is the background of these activities. *Third*, modernization theories foster the improvement of internal factors (e.g., technological innovations) in "traditional" countries. Modernization theories believe that deficiencies resulting from backward internal structures (rather than external factors) are the fundamental causes of underdevelopment. Therefore, internal factors hindering the development process must be eliminated.

On the other hand, the theories have several shortcomings, namely *first*, definition and dichotomy of traditional and modern are very simplistic. The methodological procedure by which traditional is simply defined negatively in relation to modern neglected other positive sides of these "traditional" cultures, norms or values. This simplicity leads to the diffusion of Western-style cultural and attitudinal traits to the rest of the world. *Second*, the view of ethnocentrism. The universalism of what is modern destroy alternative conceptions of the future based on the world's regions other than the US and Europe. There is no alternative for cultural relativism view, which promotes "openness, flexibility and sensitivity" to different cultures. Ethnocentrism is most overt when modernization is rendered synonymous with "Westernization", which is very "US-Eurocentric". Moreover, modernization theories are to US hegemony, its "justification, rationale, and agenda". *Third*, the practice of modernization view in development has resulted in inequalities in several countries. Modernization theories only focused on growth, not distribution, in a condition that a considerable revival of interest in the relationship between inequality and development arise in the last decade. When explaining "trickle-down effect" concept, Lewis states that "our subject

matter is growth, not distribution". This statement describes what modernization theories willing to achieve.

III. DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL INDONESIA

Due to rural development is closed related to agriculture development, and then the focus of discussion is on agricultural aspect of development in rural areas. The following explanation describes the change of agricultural development practices from times to times.

Since the colonial era, rural development has become the main concern in Indonesia. Started from the development of the Great Garden of Bogor in 1817 until 1901 "etiesche" politics, development idea was spread by the regional leader, technician (extension) as an adviser for governmental agencies. Darham goes on to say that until the colonization of Japanese command (1942-1945), the role of extension agent was primarily in socializing irrigation management, transmigration and education for the society of farmers and rural citizens. Agricultural development was not conducted, but only pushed for executing the farm management to fulfill the food reserves for war period.

In the period of 1945-50, agricultural development was re-organized, conducted by local agents. However, the environment was not very conducive due to the independent war and physical revolution. In the year 1950-60, the agricultural development was again re-organized on an education pattern with the "oil drop" method, through developed farmers and contact farmers. It was one of the major efforts aimed at increasing agricultural production. □

In the 1960s, the focus of agriculture development was maximizing rice and non-rice yields, encouraged by the green revolution, which develops "miracle" seed. As a result, farmers increased yield two or three times higher than traditional varieties. However, critique came up because this achievement only influenced "irrigated rice land," which leads to the failure in achieving equity. Moreover, this equity was also failed to be achieved due to the complexity, diversity, and variability of farmer conditions was ignored by the green revolution.

In the 1970s, the focus of agriculture development was maximizing crop yields. Habibie (2003) stated that:

the introduction of high yielding, short maturing rice varieties and the use of better cultural management practices enabled farmers to grow additional crops before and after rice. Cropping systems research was designed to evaluate new varieties (rice and non-rice) and to improve cropping patterns and management practices. The methodology focused more on a component technology such as fertilizer rates and cultivation techniques, which were designed, managed and implemented by researchers or farmers. In fact, this period was heavily dominated by agronomic interests.

In the 1980s, the focus was a shift to maximizing farm income. In this period, scientists realized that the increase of

small farming households did not only deal with rice production alone but rather with combinations or mixtures of enterprises such as livestock, fish, and agroforestry. In Indonesia, farming systems usually consist of smallholdings with interacting crop and livestock subsystems.

In the 1990s, the focus was on community-based development. The improvement of family welfare in relation to agriculture was considered an important issue which needed to be addressed in this period. However, the solution to farmers' problems was seen still in production-oriented research, in which assumed that the best solutions came from the scientists alone. And it is still largely a "top-down approach".

All of this development process was conducted by introducing external inputs and technologies, and for several reasons neglected local and indigenous knowledge developed by Indonesian people for hundreds of years. Hence, the idea of innovation adoption and innovation diffusion has been prevalent in Indonesian rural development. In this context, innovation was defined as anything new, which came from outside of the rural and to be disseminated in rural areas. □

Since the 2000s until the present, the development process has shifted to be a more participative involving community and local government leaders more integrative. Implementation of Rural Act Number 5/1979, followed by "Village Fund" implementation policy has triggered development to be more massive and planned. However, several obstacles and problems have also been faced in delivering these processes. Agricultural development was also directly affected by this policy.

IV. HOW MODERNIZATION THEORIES INFLUENCE RURAL INDONESIA DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture has been dominating rural Indonesian development. Several concerns have emerged along with this development process. The modernization viewpoint and industrialization of agriculture allegedly has typically brought false progress in Indonesia. It is said that because *first*, has drowned the nation in the control of global corporations and imported agricultural commodities, thus creating an acute and sustainable dependency. In recent years, Indonesia imported several main agricultural commodities, namely rice, sugar, corn, soybean, red chili, and shallot. *Second*, has established this country as an on-farm neocolonial zone, while upstream and downstream zones are in the hands of developed countries and global corporations. Data showed that except for plantation commodities, processed product import and agricultural processed product trade deficit is very high. On the other hand, hitherto, Indonesian export is mainly raw material. *Third*, has succeeded in alienating the agrarian culture of the generation of the country's youth, leaving behind the aging agriculture and the young generation's undervalue of agriculture (including towards livestock, fisheries, forestry, and plantation). In 2013, the average age of farmers in Indonesia was 52 years old. *Fourth*, has shut down the diversity of locally superior local commodities, internal inputs and local wisdom by "external" commodities and imported inputs. Similar to any other

countries in the world, in Indonesia, six companies dominate the marketplace for agricultural seeds and farm chemicals, like fertilizer and pesticides: BASF, Bayer, DuPont Pioneer, Dow, Monsanto, and Syngenta. Similar to Indonesia, in addition to them, agricultural inputs in Europe also been dominated by few other companies, namely Limagrain, Winfield, KWS, and Sakata. Hybrid seeds, synthetic fertilizer, and pesticides became, and continued to be, the foundation of modern agriculture. *Fifth*, has drowned the knowledge and technology of local agriculture (tacit knowledge) by technological metaphors and modern agricultural innovation. In fact, the role of indigenous knowledge on the traditional farming system is positively supporting food security; evidence showed that agricultural site which still practicing indigenous knowledge tend to have the highest biodiversity related to food ingredient. *Sixth*, has dwarfed the abundance of natural resources and weakened local civilization. The simplification of technology actually resulted in an oversimplification of potential resources owned by the country; and *eighth*, as a result of ineffectiveness and unpreparedness (especially in terms of local/village leader readiness) of "village fund" management, in several areas in rural Indonesia frauds and manipulation have emerged, deliberately or inadvertently. Hence, accompaniment and supervision from experts at the local level are important. □

V. CONCLUSION

Modernization theory is one of the most important theories in development concepts. Modernization theories believe that internal factors are the reasons for underdevelopment condition so that external interventions will be useful to foster development. This is why foreign intervention from "modern" countries important to assist "traditional" countries to generate their development. Despite it was adopted by many countries, this development paradigm received several critiques, particularly in relation to the universalism of the definition of what is "modern" and "traditional" and its development process from "traditional" to "modern" society. In addition, a reflection of modernization theories teaches us that development process should take into account local considerations in its conceptualizations.

Reflected from these theories, development should be understood and interpreted as a specific local process. There is no general prescription which is efficacious for every single country. Similarly, development is a political process, particularly in the global context. Modernization theories show that one dominant paradigm can govern the others. Countries, especially the "traditional" ones, should do a self-reflection and design their alternative paradigm in the development process, based on their philosophical origins and their national orientation.

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