Improving self organizing capabilities of local communities for sustainable development in decentralized Indonesia: The roles of procedural justice and social learning

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Abstract: The development planning process introduced under Law No. 25/2004 is said to be a better approach to increase public participation in decentralised Indonesia. This Law has introduced planning mechanisms, called Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (musrenbang), to provide a forum for development planning. In spite of the expressed intention of these mechanisms to improve public participation, some empirical observations have cast doubt on the outcomes. As a result, some local governments have tried to provide alternative mechanisms for participatory local development planning processes.

Since planning constitutes one of the most effective ways to improve community empowerment, this paper aims to examine the extent to which the alternative local development planning process in Indonesia provides sufficient opportunities to improve the self organising capabilities of communities to sustain development programs to meet local needs. In so doing, this paper explores the key elements and approaches of the concept of community empowerment and shows how they can be incorporated within planning processes. Based on this, it then examines the problems encountered by musrenbang in increasing community empowerment. Having done this, it is argued that to change current unfavourable outcomes, procedural justice and social learning approaches need to be incorporated as pathways to community empowerment. Lastly the capacity of an alternative local planning process, called Sistem Dukungan (SISDUK), introduced in South Sulawesi, offering scope to incorporate procedural justice and social learning is explored as a means to improve the self organizing capabilities of local communities.

Keywords: Local Planning Processes; Procedural Justice; Self Organizing Capabilities; Social Learning; Sustainable Development.

1. Introduction

During the administration of the new order era in Indonesia from the 1960s up to 1997, the priority that was given to accelerate national economic growth has resulted in development planning that tended to be heavily centralised. The reformation era which started to take place in Indonesia in 1998 called for a more meaningful appreciation of the needs and initiatives of local communities. This impacted on the necessity to make development management more participative and reflective of local conditions and aspiration.

In the process of fulfilling demands for national and local reform of government and development management, some regulations have been introduced by the central government of Indonesia as a response to foster decentralization. One of these regulations is Law No. 25/2004 on Development Planning Systems aimed specifically to strengthen national and local planning processes. This law provides mechanisms for local development planning to absorb and accommodate real local needs.

The development planning process under Law No. 25/2004 is said to be a better approach to increase public participation in decentralised Indonesia. Law No. 25/2004 introduced planning mechanisms and activities called Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Musrenbang) or freely translated a forum of development planning. In spite of the expressed intention of these mechanisms to improve public participation, some empirical observations have cast doubt on the outcomes. This doubt is associated with the fact that these mechanisms are, in their nature, more or less similar to the old fashioned planning process called Proses Perencanaan, Pelaksanaan dan Pengendalian Pembangunan Daerah/ PSD (a process of planning, implementing and controlling local development programs), which had been strictly applied before the decentralization of development management took place [1].

Since the current musrenbang mechanisms have some pitfalls in maximising local community participation, during the reformation era, some local governments have tried to provide alternative mechanisms or models for participatory local development planning processes that are intended to improve community participation and empowerment. These are well documented by some ground studies in, for instance, Bandung District, West Java [2], Solo [3], and other part of Indonesia i.e. East Sumatera, West Java, Central Java, East Java, South Sulawesi and Papua [4] and Takalar Regency [5].
Since planning has been claimed to be one of the most effective ways to improve community empowerment [6], it is of particular importance to examine to what extent alternative local planning initiatives in Indonesia have contributed to increased public participation and therefore improved local community empowerment for sustaining development programs. Viewed from this standpoint, the fundamental question that needs to be addressed is “Do current local development planning processes in Indonesia provide sufficient opportunities to improve the self organising capabilities of communities to sustain development programs to meet local needs?” This paper aims to provide a theoretical and empirical background (the rationale) of an approach to answer this question. In so doing, it firstly explores the key elements and approaches of the concept of community empowerment and shows how they can be incorporated within planning processes. Secondly it then examines the problems encountered by musrenbang in increasing community empowerment. Having done this, it is argued that to change current unfavourable outcomes, procedural justice and social learning approaches need to be adopted as pathways to community empowerment. Lastly it discusses briefly an alternative local planning process, called Sistem Dukungan (SISDUK), introduced in South Sulawesi, which suggests scope for the incorporation of procedural justice and social learning initiatives to improve the self organizing capabilities of local communities.

2. Towards sustainable development: Improving social sustainability of local communities

As extensively found in the literature, the concept of sustainable development, which was firstly introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development [7] has been promoted as a compelling development paradigm across the globe. Even though this concept is originally rooted in the urgency to maintain the ecological sustainability for the future development, it also acknowledges the equal importance of social sustainability and economic sustainability and the interrelationship amongst them [8]. Not surprisingly, achieving sustainability, therefore, is argued as meeting desired development goals while putting the best efforts to preserve the capital stocks of these three main aspects of development, including natural economic and social capital [9].

Ideally, development processes need to take into consideration the rationally balanced contributions of these three interconnected aspects. In practice, however, trade off and tension between them often occur. This can be seen from the main discourse and the operation of sustainable development, emphasising one aspect over the others. Foladori [8], for instance, has shown that understanding of the dynamics of development process has led to the conclusion that the ecological aspect has subordinated the other ones. McKenzie [10] even further notes that there has been tendency for the role of social aspects to be hardly ever equal to the economic and environmental concerns. The implication of this is quite obvious. Firstly, compared to the other two aspects, there has been little attention given to the clear definition and concept of social sustainability [10], [8] and [11]. Secondly, as Foladori [8] argues, the argumentations that mainly view social sustainability as a means, instead of an end in itself, in the pursuit of economic and environmental targets have resulted in the limitation to tackle the fundamental problems of social sustainability such as structural changes to social inequity and exclusion.

In general the dimensions of social sustainability embrace physical factors and non-physical factors. The first factors are associated with accessibility to the built environment in a given location such as the main services and social amenities. While the second factors are related to the sustainability of a community itself such as social interactions/social networks, participation in collective groups, community stability, sense of place and safety and security [11]. In relation to these factors, Heywood [12], who identifies sustainability as one of the competing value sets shaping creative and humanly fulfilling planning suggests reciprocity as a core factor for sustainable communities. This paper focuses on such non-physical factors of social sustainability.

Social sustainability, following McKenzie’s suggestion [10], is seen as a condition and a process within communities to achieve such condition. However, slightly different from McKenzie who defines it as a life enhancing situation, the condition meant here is the situation where local communities are able to sustainably and independently manage various development activities in accordance with their needs. This condition is attainable if at the community level, the capacities to participate in development programs have been owned by local people. Magis [13] who has developed the dimension of community resilience as an important indicator of social sustainability indicates the importance of these capacities. The concrete form of these capacities is the presence of continuous collective actions in local communities to meet their needs and solve the perceived problems. It is argued by Soetomo, that the continuity of these collective actions is only allowed if the process of their institutionalization has taken place [14]. In terms of the process to realize the intended condition, social sustainability should be regarded as an end in itself not only a means and therefore as Foladori [8] put forward, social sustainability should include community empowerment. Given this, it is then relevant to discuss self organizing capabilities of local communities as a fundamental prerequisite for social sustainability.
3. Self-organising capabilities in the community empowerment concept

Definitions of community empowerment can helpfully be illuminated from the two main words forming it: community and empowerment. Despite the problematic definition of “community” itself, Ife [6] suggests that the word of community should be seen from either its objective or subjective aspects. The objective aspect is linked to the attributes describing a particular community, while the subjective one is linked to the feeling and experiences of a community. Thus Ife’s suggestion is similar to Heywood who defines communities as “groups of people who experience and acknowledge significant links, expectations and responsibilities towards each other” [12, p.5]. These groups do not need to be neighbours, but share neighbourly feelings which may be based on shared spaces, realms of interaction or interests [12], [15]. From its various definitions, it can be generally said that there are at least three features of a community. (1) It consists of a group of people, (2) it pursues communal interests, and (3) it utilizes collective actions to meet such interests.

On the other hand, the definition of empowerment has been widely used and described in a number of literatures, normally based on the elementary, central word and concept of power [16], [17]. At the end, according to Narayan as cited in Koggel [18], when trying to construct an accurate definition of empowerment, one has to take into consideration both the connection of the concept to the development outcomes and the framework of factors controlling empowerment efforts.

According to Brinkerhoff and Azfar [15], if the two words of community and empowerment are combined, the core concept associated to community empowerment is the concept of collective action. Arguing further, they define the scope of community empowerment as improving community capabilities to act collectively to meaningfully influence and control decision-making process involving their life concerns.

Empowering local communities. Based on the power conceptualized by Weber, Uphoff [16] has identified three domains that can be used to analyse empowerment efforts. The first domain is the result. An analysis of empowerment in this domain looks at the outcomes the empowerment programs. Resource becomes the second domain and its analysis is mainly about the assets to be used to achieve the desired objectives. The last domain is the capability indicating the ability to alter power resources effectively to obtain intended goals or objectives becomes its focus of the analysis. Uphoff [16] further argues that measuring empowerment programs should not concentrate solely on the first one given that it does not reflect the empowerment itself but rather the consequence of the empowerment activities, and should therefore include all three domains. He then suggests that empowerment is essentially about analysing the capability aspect with individual skills and collective organizations as centres of measurement. This suggestion is consistent with the capability approach that has been promoted by the contemporary human centred development paradigm. Specifically Sen [19, p.75] states that “a person’s capability refers to the scope of community empowerment as improving community capabilities to act collectively to meaningfully influence and control decision-making process involving their life concerns.

The capacity of collective actions. Though both Uphoff [16] and Sen [19] agree on the importance of capabilities, they seem to be advising a different focus of the level of capability improvement. Uphoff, as Evans [21] and Stewart [22] do, proposes that improving capabilities should not be accentuated, as Sen tends to do so, at the individual level but rather at the collective or group level. The reasons for these are:

1. The opportunities for people to benefit from and to sustain a given development program may become reduced by individualism [16]. This can be seen, for instance, the failure of the project of the provision of drinkable water facilities for villagers in many parts of Indonesia due to the lack of sense of ownership amongst the local people [23];
2. Members of marginal segment of communities, individually tend to have limited resource endowment that organizing and scaling up the level of their resource support are needed through effective collective actions [16],[21]. These collective actions will also magnify their economic and political power [22];
3. Collective capabilities will influence individual capabilities in the sense that they will influence individuals’ preferences and behaviour as well as their ability to accomplish the desired functioning through collective actions [21], [22], [24].
4. Nevertheless such individual capacities as personal choice, empathy and a spirit of reciprocity may themselves be very important contributors to the collective capabilities of their communities. Although the concept of collective capabilities is often slippery and even elusive, it is nonetheless intuitively useful, and is reflected in such widely advocated entities as human and social capital. It is demonstrated in such celebrated activities as the traditional system of Subak or cooperative water management in Bali, and the “polder model” of cooperation which gave rise to the consensual model of Dutch decision taking on public matters of environment and social housing. It is no part of community empowerment to advocate collective capabilities that claim to supersede or devalue...
individual independence, choice or initiative. Collective capabilities therefore reside most securely in exchange of information on one’s own and others’ talents and in the development of mutual trust and belief in the opportunities that others present for the advantage of oneself and one’s family. This achieves empirical form, for instance in the “Associational Economics” of Emiglia Romagna in Northern Italy, the Basque region of northern Spain and Germany’s Wurtemburg [25].

Following the above reasons, this article takes collective actions or collectivities as a major factor in local community empowerment and therefore worthy of analysis and review. In so doing, particular attention needs to be given on the concepts of self organizing capabilities and cooperation as significant elements of collective capabilities.

The roles of self organizing in collective capabilities. Definition of collective capabilities is not much found in the literature. Furthermore, they have been inconclusively defined. Stewart [22], for example, does not advise an exact definition. However he has mentioned some characteristics of group capabilities including the ability to access the resources, the way the group works and the impacts perceived by the members and the others, the group capabilities that represent the average of capabilities of the individuals in the group. Another explanation of collective capabilities by Comim and Carey (as cited in Ibrahim [24]) simply suggests that capabilities that are gained through social interaction can be categorised into collective capabilities. Ibrahim himself only states that collective capabilities are not the average of individual capabilities, as Stewart points out, but rather the capabilities that “the individual alone would neither have nor be able to achieve, if he/she did not join a collectivity” [24, p. 404].

Particular attention is given to the definition of collective capabilities that is proposed by Sharma and Ohama [26]. In the discussion on community development approaches, they have introduced the term “self organizing capability” to indicate the collective capabilities of a local community. Though in their discussion, Sharma and Ohama did not specifically link this term with Sen’s capability approach mentioned in the previous section, conceptually they seem to be consistent each other.

The self organizing capability is “the capability to spontaneously reorganize the existing pattern of resource acquisition, utilization and management into a new, alternative one so as to maintain the sustainable basis for daily activities, by way of selectively accommodating specific factors in changes”[26, p.131]. This definition is very complex, raising as many issues as it resolves including the concept of “spontaneous reorganization” and does not therefore fully clarify the meaning of collective capabilities given that it just indicates the functioning of capabilities in terms of resource management. Sharma and Ohama seem to agree with Uphoff [16] regarding the existence of other functions of collective action such as decision making, conflict resolution, and communication and coordination. However, as they stated “the common resources and facilities, by nature, require the creation of mutual consultation mechanisms among members in a community or group around their fair utilization and appropriate management” [26, p. 28]. In other words, other functions of a collective action should be seen in the context of “mutual consultation mechanisms” to ensure resource mobilization and utilization. Even with these qualifications collective capabilities remain conjectural and, raise questions of transparency, accountability, self serving by self appointed spokespersons, and resulting abuses of power. As such they will justify further investigation, not least because of their clear practical utility. Participatory planning, for instance could be regarded as one aspect of self organizing, and many of the most widely advocated movements of contemporary society, including urban farms, micro credit and environmental activism seem to rely for their energy and success on some form or another of self organizing capabilities.

Another definition of organizing capabilities is from Shigetomi [27, p.1] who suggest it as “the ability to shoulder the problem solving process and to secure the resources necessary for organization”. According to this definition, there are two abilities that feature self organizing capabilities: the abilities to solve the problems and the abilities to sustain the provision of resources to run organizational activities. Referring to the cycle of planning processes, these two abilities can be obtained and improved through planning activities.

Considering the above definitions, self organizing capabilities can be generally defined as the ability of a collective, organized action to run its functions in order to meet the desired needs and objectives. By this definition, self organizing capabilities are regarded as a set of characteristics that allow a collective action to function efficiently and effectively without coercion.

Dimensions of self organizing capabilities. The evaluation of self organizing capabilities can be seen from various perspectives. At the one side, measuring this concept is associated with the stages of community organizing or building as mentioned earlier. Shigetomi [27], for example, using stages of community organizing such as setting the task, designing the organization, identifying the target group, proposing the actions, mobilizing people to join organization and controlling the members as the criteria to evaluate organizing capabilities. Meanwhile, the capability of a collective action to run its function can also become the centrality of evaluation. These functions
include decision making, resource mobilization, conflict resolution, and communication and coordination [16], [26]. Measuring self-organizing capabilities in line with this point of view will embrace aspects such as collective assets/resources, collective knowledge and skills, collective beliefs and attitudes, leadership quality, and relation or networking with other people/groups [16], [26], [28]. The extent to which these aspects have changed will indicate the impacts of a planning process on self-organizing capabilities of local communities.

Improving self-organizing capabilities of the local communities is also influenced by the role of local governments. In the concept of good governance, it is stated that the main role of local authorities is to facilitate the conducive situation where local people can be empowered [29]. At local level, a local government is part of local society [26], [27]. The study conducted by Shigetomi [27] shows how such local governments in Philippines and Thailand have played important roles in improving organizing capabilities of the local society despite their lack of a sense of local engagement.

4. Linking empowerment with planning processes: Procedural justice and social learning approaches

Having discussed the centrality of self-organizing capabilities in the empowerment concept, now it is important to identify the key elements of empowerment. This will enable us to discover the red thread that links empowerment including self-organising capabilities with a planning process.

Key elements of empowerment. To evaluate the extent to which local communities have been empowered, it is essential to identify the key elements that need to be put in place for empowerment efforts. Referring to World Bank [30] these elements include:

a. Access to information. Providing information for communities will enable them to take advantages of opportunities, access services, exercise their right, negotiate effectively and hold authorities accountable.

b. Inclusion and participation. Bringing marginalised people and communities into decision making will ensure that the use of public resources is based on local knowledge and needs. For this to happen, rules and mechanisms fostering public inclusion and participation should be created.

c. Accountability. This could include political, administrative and public accountability with several tools that can be applied such as access to information, access to public goods and services and access to laws and impartial justices and fiscal management transparency.

d. Local organizational capacity. Community residents must be able to work together, organize themselves and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest. Organised communities are more likely to have their voices heard and their demands met.

In relation to the last element, Laverack [30] argues that the organizational aspects of community empowerment indicate the process of community empowerment enabling individuals and groups to organize themselves. These organizational aspects consist of:

1. Participation. This indicates the level of individual community members’ involvement in small or larger organizations.

2. Leadership. This is concerned with the leadership quality (styles and skills) that can influence the development of groups and communities.

3. Organizational structures. This aspect embraces two different but interrelated dimensions, namely the structural dimension of committee and the social dimension of a sense of belonging and connection and personal relationships.

4. Resources mobilization. The ability of a community to mobilize required resources.

5. Problem assessment. The process where a community is able to identify the problems, solutions and actions to address the problems.

6. Asking why. This aspect display the ability of a community to conduct critical assessment of the contextual issues such as social, political and economic that affect their disempowered situations.

7. Links with others. This show the ability of local communities to create relationship with other people and organizations to support their efforts in achieving their goals/objectives.

8. Change agents. This indicates the role of outside agents in enhancing the ability and competencies of local communities to manage their own lives.

9. Program management which describe the ability of programme management to improve influence of communities over decisions and the access to necessary resources. In relation to this aspect, it is very important to define the clear roles, responsibilities and line management of the involved stakeholders. Laverack explicitly suggests the importance of some aspects such as change agents and program management which are very relevant to the condition particularly in developing countries like Indonesia given the changing roles of local government agencies in the process of decentralization. It has been a fact that the unclear roles of stakeholders
involved in program management (including in planning processes) remains a main constraint to maximizing public participation [32].

In reference to the classification of empowerment concepts which Elwood [33] has suggested, there are three approaches that can be used to accommodate the changes of the key elements mentioned above in empowering local communities. The first approach is from a distributive perspective which regards empowerment as distributive changes in more access to goods and services as well as more chances to contribute to political processes. The second one is the adoption of a procedural perspective arguing empowerment as procedural changes through accommodation of people’s views, knowledge, preferences and needs in decision making processes and the improvement of their authority and legitimacy. And the last approach is developed from the notion that a capacity building process constitutes the core element of empowerment given that its significance to allow the enhancement of community capabilities to decide and manage their own actions.

It is suggested in this paper that the combination of these approaches will contribute to a maximum result of empowerment programs. However, it is argued that the procedural perspective should include distributive changes as it is built on the concept of justice as fairness suggested by Rawls [34], [35] as discussed later in the next section. On the other hand, capacity building will be looked at from a social learning process as an approach to improve local community capabilities. The combination of these two approaches is also based on the notion that in the context of a developing country, such as Indonesia in general and in the study region in particular, disempowered communities need not only to have confidence that they can participate and influence decision affecting them but also the capacity to decide and organize their collective actions.

In summary, Table 1 shows the key elements of community empowerment that are covered by procedural justice and social learning approaches.

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<th>Community Empowerment Issues.</th>
<th>Procedural Justice</th>
<th>Social Learning</th>
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<td>• Creating access to information.</td>
<td>• Improving collaborative capacities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ensuring fairness by promoting opportunities for inclusion and individual participation of all members of a community.</td>
<td>• Improving leadership opportunities and capabilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ensuring accountability of local authorities/ state agencies, CBOs and NGOs.</td>
<td>• Knowledge and skills of resources mobilization.</td>
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<td>• Strengthening community control and influence over decision making processes.</td>
<td>• Constructive skills in asking why/reflection process.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Creating access to necessary resource allocation.</td>
<td>• Creating and strengthening links with others (Bonding and bridging capital)</td>
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<td>• Improving collective skills and knowledge in terms of managerial and technical aspects.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating and improving trust amongst involved stakeholders (Linking capital)</td>
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As identified above, procedural justice and capacity building through social learning issues are central for community empowerment. These two concerns are used as an entry point to explore the link of empowerment concept to planning processes. Therefore the next discussion will focus on procedural justice and social learning in the planning context.

**Procedural Justice.** In the endeavours of empowering local communities through the improvement of the quality of their participation in development planning processes, there are at least two fundamental issues that need to be taken into consideration. The first issue is the extent to which local people and communities, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised in empowerment can find justice in through involvement in the planning process and its outcomes for them. Second, given actual local conditions, to what extent the planning processes can facilitate the improvement of self organizing capabilities of local people and communities. This second issue is very crucial and essential since in many cases of empowerment projects including in Indonesia, the roles of adopted planning processes tend to be reduced and more oriented to solely produce plan documents (an administrative target).
When planning processes are defined as the allocation of scarce resources to various interests of different segments of the society, as in the first issue above, they become heavily reliant on conceptions of justice. As in the words of Campbell and Marshall,

“We regard planning as an activity which is concerned with making choices about good and bad, right and wrong, with and for the others in relation to particular places. It is about making ethical choices over issues which are often highly contested. Planning is therefore profoundly concerned with justice” [36, p. 240]

In the attempts to give an account for procedural justice in planning activities, the recent debates have been extensively inspired by the notion of justice as fairness which John Rawls has suggested [35]. To produce justice “Men are to decide in advance how they are to regulate their claims against one another and what is to be the foundation charter of the society. Just as each person must decide by rational reflection what constitutes his good, that is, the system of ends which it is rational for him to pursue, so a group of person must decide once and for what is to count among them as just and unjust” [34, p.33].

This is to say that, justice as fairness focuses mainly on processes or mechanisms of decision making whose framework or principles must be firstly determined. Once the principles and mechanisms or processes are considered fair and accepted then the outcomes of decision making must be regarded just for the involved parties. The relevance of justice as fairness for planning processes can be found at the principles adopted i.e. liberty and equity. The first principle assumes that “each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all” [34, p.42]. The second states that “social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions; first they are attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunities; and second, they are to be the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle)”[34, p.42].

According to Heywood [12], these two principles constitute the values of social justice that must be taken into account when setting development goals through community planning. These principles, particularly the second one are very essential to be adopted in setting up institutional arrangements for fair community participation, including in planning processes that aim to empower the vulnerable segment of local communities.

Explanations for justice in decision making processes, including in the planning context, can be connected to two main frameworks that are widely used and known, namely distributive and procedural justice. The former justice refers to perceived fairness in the distribution of resources or outcomes, while the latter one is more concerned with the perceived procedural justice in the process of decision making [37], [38]. To achieve distributive justice, at least one of these three rules can be applied: either the equity principle i.e. everyone will get the same proportion or the equality principle i.e. the obtained proportion is equivalent to contributions or the need principle i.e. outcomes or resources meet needs. While for the pursuit of procedural justice, procedural fairness consisting of structural, cultural and personal aspects must be satisfied [37]. The debate on the superiority of one kind of justice over another or the need to combine them in a given context is numerous found in the literature. Nevertheless, so far according to Campbell [39], the discussions on justice in planning theory have been focusing on procedural concerns or widely known as procedural justice.

This article also focuses on procedural justice. It is, however, important to understand that procedural justice, as Rawls has suggested in “justice as fairness”, can be achieved when it is built on rules fulfilling the principle of distributive justice [35]. So the criteria for procedural justice must consider the achievement of distributive justice. The emphasis on procedural justice is also based on the consideration that an evaluation of community participation in planning processes should be fundamentally about measuring the public influence on decision making processes. That is to have access to power and resources as well as required services. The greater the public influence on decision making processes, the more likely they perceive the fairness of procedural justice and accordingly the more likely the planning outcomes to be accepted. It can be stated that the process of building self-organizing capabilities, community groups or organized actions are pursuing this influence and access to meet their interests through planning processes.

**The Need for Social Learning.** In order to legitimise their approach in increasing public participation, planning processes with objective rationality paradigms have adopted a procedural justice approach that heavily focuses on procedures and processes. The problems to emerge from this approach could be, for example, that the bureaucracies in which local planners mainly reside tend to seek quick results at the expense of the substance quality of decision made due to the belief that the procedures of formal rationality will automatically pave way for having adequate policy contents [40]. Procedural justice, therefore, seems to marginalize another significant element of planning namely the quality content or substance. This is the element that later becomes the central issue around which most of criticisms to procedural justice are derived from.
The position of the substance quality is very important and has been the core aspect of planning processes in creating substantive justice, indicating that the substance of planning outcomes factually meets the needs and preferences of planning targets. Campbell [39, p.1], for example, believes that if planning is to be seen as “the art of situated ethical judgement” then good and fair planning necessities not only just procedures but also more importantly an appropriate understanding of substance and values. After all, in many practical cases, substantive and procedural perspectives of planning cannot be disconnected due to the fact, as Sanyal [41, p. 228] has conclusively stated, “planning procedures are largely influenced by the particular substantive nature of problems to be addressed”. Furthermore Sanyal [41] argues that having a good consideration on the substantive nature of problems will enhance the planners’ capability of having institutional insights about resistance likely to be faced when identifying a problem in a given procedure. From the viewpoint of creating substantive justice, the major concern that procedural justice needs to think about is to quote Rawls [34, p.75],

“Clearly we cannot say that a particular state of affairs is just because it could have been reached by following a fair procedure. A fair procedure translates its fairness to the outcome only when it is actually carried out”.

The fair outcomes can more possibly be acquired if planning processes, utilizing the procedural justice approach, also apply another approach that is able to generate critical thinking processes about the underlying assumptions regarding actions to be taken. The meaningful critical thinking process requires deliberative practices which are essential for encouraging participatory planning [42]. This is the first reason why this paper advocates social learning to complement the procedural justice approach in the planning process to improve its quality in terms of the fulfillment of both the fair procedures and substance. Another basis of justification is as explained in detail later, the ability of a social learning approach to enrich the quality of public or community participation resulting in more empowered local people and communities. Social learning provides more significant social venues and outcomes by which local people and communities can improve their self-organising capabilities.

Wildemeersch [43, p.100] describes social learning as “the learning taking place in groups, communities, networks and social systems that operate in new, unexpected, uncertain and unpredictable circumstances; it is directed at the solution of unexpected context problems and it is characterized by an optimal use of the problem solving capacity which is available within this group or community”. Others define social learning in slightly different words. However, it is quite clear that a deliberative process of collective actions becomes the main feature of social learning. This process, as extensively discussed by Forester [42] and Habermas [44] involves purposeful interaction, reflection and communication.

Social learning can be specifically associated with the efforts to improve organisational capacities of local communities. Such social learning that positions learning processes at wider contexts such as organizational and social levels is distinctive from individual learning. Unlike the latter, social learning as collective actions in a form of discussion to solve the problem is the crucial element of deliberation enabling individuals with different background to listen, understand and come to more reasoned, informed and common decisions [45]. Consequently, a social learning approach should be able to provide a significant framework that can guide a planning process to create a social venue within which local people and communities can seek to achieve some social outcomes which are essential for building their self-organizing capabilities. The improvement of knowledge, changes of cognition and attitudes, technical skill, and social skill as well as the creation and increases of social capital stocks such as trust both amongst members of communities and towards local authorities, social relationships, and the number of social institutions constitute outcomes of social learning [26], [46], [47].

**Social Learning for Participatory Planning Processes.** In planning perspectives, the strategic position of social learning has been determinedly argued by a number of theorists and practitioners of planning. Friedman [48] for examples in his explanation of the metamorphosis of planning has made it clear that planning at its last stage of theoretical development should be acting as social learning. According to Friedman the application of social learning concept in planning thought is rooted in pragmatism perspectives with a “learning by doing” approach mainly advocated by John Dewey. Later inspired by Dewey, Lewis Mumford, particularly in regional planning context, put forward that social transformation for a particular region can be striven through planning that is idealized a process of people self education [48].

In the literature, so far, how social learning is associated with participation including in planning and decision making processes can be identified into various models. Muro and Jeffrey [46] have identified two prominent models of these associations. The role of participatory planning processes as a tool for the promotion of social learning indicates the first model. In this model, social learning is obviously the outcomes of participatory processes. At the second model, contrary to the previous model, social learning becomes a useful approach in formulating
participatory processes. This paper follows the latter model as it seeks to examine the facilitative roles of social learning in improving the quality of public or community participation.

5. Local development planning in decentralised Indonesia

Having explored the significance of incorporating procedural justice and social learning approaches in a planning process, this section examines the problems encountered by the current planning mechanism widely practised by local governments in Indonesia. This mechanism is called *Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (musrenbang)*.

**Musrenbang: Old wine in a new bottle?** The journey of local development planning in a decentralized system in Indonesia was marked by the collapse of the New Order administration at the beginning of *Era Reformasi* (the reform era) in 1997. This historical event has triggered the occurrence of reversed flows of power, shifting from central to local interests. This change has then resulted in the unavoidable adjustment of the managerial mainstream of development and government concepts and practices, moving from a centralized system to a more decentralized one [49].

During the New Order regime under Suharto’s presidency, though development management was heavily centralized, the central government, in fact had a political will to put in place decentralized approaches in local development. This can be indentified from the implementation of Law No. 25/1974 on Regional Government, ruling the application of decentralization, deconcentration and attachment principles in local government activities. This is then followed by some derivative regulations which have formally absorbed the terms of participation and civic engagement. One of these regulations is *Pedoman Penyusunan Perencanaan dan Pengendalian Pembangunan di Daerah* (P5D), combining both top down and bottom up approaches at regional arenas of planning. Although the P5D planning method has formulated a mechanism which seems to be bottom up or participative, in practice, nevertheless, the voices articulating the lack of central government’s affirmative action in internalizing participatory approaches in local planning emerged with documented empirical evidences. Some studies have suggested that this mechanism was merely a formality and did not substantially advance local people and community involvement in building the capabilities and mobilising the resources of the local community [1], [50].

In the planning process, the voices of people at grass roots level were not meaningfully accommodated since decision making procedures favor village elites who, in most cases, became government co-opted parties who legitimized development policies or programs imposed by upper governmental levels. Therefore, the planning process is not transparent and tends to be manipulative in creating a development program for local people or communities [1], [14], [51]. Perhaps this is due to the fact that local government agencies had a tendency to serve the interests of central government rather than the preference of local communities [52], [53]. Given above evidences, Soetomo [14] and Hadi [1] argue the need for revision of planning processes. In so doing, they suggested the imperative of creating a process in which more public participation, responsiveness, transparency, accountability and social learning can be meaningfully promoted.

On the other hand, the arrival of the *Era Reformasi* has, as cited earlier, brought about local demands on the massive implementation of decentralized governmental and developmental activities in Indonesia. In response to this, the central government in January 2001 enacted the laws No. 22/1999 on Regional Autonomy and No. 26/1999 on the Fiscal Balance between the Central Government and Regional Government which later in October 2004 were revised into Law No. 32/2004 on Regional Government and Law No.33/2004 on the Fiscal Balance between the Central Government and Regional Government. Specifically, in relation to local development planning, as mentioned earlier, the central government issued Law No. 25/2004 on the System of National Development Planning, which rules not only mechanisms of development planning at national level, but also at local levels. These mechanisms known as musrenbang can be seen in Fig. 2. *Musrenbang* is a deliberative multi stakeholder forum that involves government and nongovernmental stakeholders. This forum is used in a planning system to encourage public participation in proposing, identifying and prioritizing development policies and programs.
Comparing this mechanism with that guided by the PSD strictly adopted by the local government during the centralization, fundamentally, the nature of a deliberative planning forum which is incapable of creating genuine and meaningful social arenas of public participation to channel and reflect local communities’ aspirations and conditions is still unchanged. It is true that, unlike PSD, under musrenbang, local people and governments have been given significant discretion in planning processes that the central government cannot longer dictate development policies and programs at the local level. Additionally, community representatives are involved at every musrenbang levels. However, the overall process of planning, still reflects the domination of local government agencies rather than local people. In this process, so far, there have been no mechanisms by which local people and their representatives could discuss deliberatively their perceived problems and needs. The resulting development proposals do not fully reflect real conditions due to the limited space to elicit and validate relevant information from local people during the planning process. At the final stage of bottom up process in the district level, the development proposals from local people are mostly neglected or manipulated by local government units that have prioritized their own agendas of development programs. Wilson [54, p. 8] has called this as a phenomenon of “a guided bottom-up process”. As a result, it is not surprising that the capacities of musrenbang are considered unsatisfactory and tend to create the same problems faced by the PSD.

Specifically, from the stand point of creating social justice, so far the roles of the planning process under musrenbang tend to be limited and more oriented to solely produce plan documents (an administrative target) at the expense of the quality of the substance of planning outcomes. In this situation, public participation displays degrees of tokenism rather than true citizen power [55]. Musrenbang is still not able to create a conducive social venue where local people could articulate their aspirations/voice meaningfully. Local planning mechanisms at the grassroots level still show the phenomenon of elite capture since community elites and local government officers are still evidently dominant [54]. This is also worsened by the absence of clear rules and criteria about the roles of involved stakeholders and decision made. Additionally, information needed in the planning process is still considerably limited or even unavailable. On the one hand, this information is in main possession of local governments’ and can be hardly transparently accessible by the public, whereas the musrenbang planning process pays little attention on
how local communities can learn to analyze the required information and lastly, there is no feedback mechanism put in place with regard to the decision made [32]. In Sakuma’s words [5], *musrenbang* has been lacking transparency, accountability and fairness in the process of need assessments and evaluation in the planning system. So far there has been no mechanism by which a sufficient dialogue between local communities and government with regard to determining the feasibility of a development project based on the local characteristics can be performed [5]. These conditions will result in the constraint of local communities to access resources needed for collective capabilities to run their function.

There have also been some problems faced by *musrenbang* to accommodate the role of social learning for the improvement of the planning process and outcomes. In general, *musrenbang* has inadequate capacity to provide significant opportunities for the local people to learn about the nature of their actual problems and the required solution alternatives based on their understanding on local potentials (cognitive enhancement). That same is true for moral enrichment i.e. encouraging local communities to consider ethical judgments as both an individual and member of communities in making decision. Moreover, the quality of *Musrenbang* is also worsened by its inability to encourage meaningful deliberative actions amongst stakeholders, indicated by an undemocratic sequence of planning activities, mostly one way communication, a lack of activities that can be used as a common medium to develop participants’ creativity and conflict resolution and the absence of a credible person/party who can facilitate the planning process particularly at the community level. Lastly, community organizations involved in *musrenbang* have limited capacities. This problem can be observed from their lack of knowledge and skill about the planning process, of an understanding of how to advocate, research and analyze the information, and of partnership with local government agencies and legislature [32]. These situations will eventually impact on the low achievement of social outcomes of the planning process such as collective knowledge and skills, values, trust and norm.

6. Research Challenges

**The relevance and scope.** Some previous studies have been also undertaken to examine the capacity and the effectiveness of local development planning in Indonesia in encouraging public involvement. Amongst these studies are those conducted by Siregar, Team Work Lapera, P3P Unram (as cited in Hadi et al. [1]), Centre of Research of Local Government School (STPDN) [50]. However, their focus is primarily on the evaluation of the planning process without linking it specifically to procedural justice and social learning approaches.

A more recent study on local development planning in Indonesia was carried out by Nugroho [56] who investigated the efficacy of *musrenbang* in local people’s empowerment in Pemalang District of Central Java. This study produced some useful results, especially with regard to clarification about the dysfunction of the *musrenbang* procedures in inviting public engagement. Still, this study appears not to explore social learning processes which can improve the current *musrenbang* process. Additionally, as Nugroho’s study investigated local community empowerment, it mainly focuses on the role of planning processes to directly create empowering development programs rather than exploring the importance of planning processes as a social arena where local communities can enhance their self organizing capabilities.

Taking into account their relevance and importance as indicated above, there is scope for future research to examine the implementation of procedural justice and social learning in a given local planning process in decentralised Indonesia. Investigation is therefore proposed into first the extent to which local planning processes can incorporate or achieve these two public participation approaches; and second, their subsequent impact on the improvement of self organizing capabilities of local communities.

The relevance of this future research generally can be closely projected to the national interests of Indonesia in accelerating the capacity of local people to carry on development programs sustainably. This accelerating effort is an urgent need in the era of reinforcing local autonomy. The momentous opportunity offered by the mainstream change of government and development management – from centralization to decentralization - in Indonesia in the period of more than a decade, should have opened up a significant sphere of activity and the opportunity for local governments to improve the capabilities of the self organization of local communities. One way of utilizing meaningful social learning and procedural justice approaches is through the local development planning system.

So far, local initiatives toward this favorable situation have been very limited. The high expectation of the central government of Indonesia and the anxieties regarding the inability of the local participants in sustainably managing their development activities should be addressed by the local decision makers.

**The object.** An interesting opportunity to test the relevance of procedural justice and social learning has recently occurred in the implementation of *Sistem Dukungan* (SISDUK) in Takalar Regency. SISDUK is a development supporting system which was initiated by the government of Takalar Regency in collaboration with JICA in 1999 for community empowerment programs when decentralization of government and development management started to
take place in Indonesia. This system has introduced an alternative mechanism of planning which is completely different from the existing local planning process (*musrenbang*) and it therefore tries to overcome the weakness of bottom up planning attached to *musrenbang*. In order to strengthen participatory planning, SISDUK provides a supplementary planning mechanism, allowing the formulation of feasible and realistic development proposals that are substantially decided by local communities. The final decision to adopt these proposals then follows either the SISDUK mechanism if the required resources/services/facilities are already available or the *musrenbang* mechanism if otherwise (see Fig. 3).

### Model and Characteristics of SISDUK

The need and capability to situate local people and communities to be the main development subject as the feature of participatory development necessary in decentralised Indonesia became the main reason why the JICA experts adopted Participatory Local Social Development (PLSD) as the model of SISDUK empowerment programs [5]. In general, this model aims “to facilitate the process of building social capability and strengthening institutional mechanism of a local society as a whole towards self-reliant, sustainable development” [26, p. 124]. The core of this concept is the capabilities of local people and communities as the part of a local society to manage their development activities. Therefore following this concept, local community empowerment should be viewed as a process to improve such capabilities.

Based on the PLSD concept, SISDUK argues that basically in building their capacities, local communities have their own resources and capabilities that are supposed to be utilized to meet their needs. Consequently, instead of solely providing public goods and services to local people as passive recipients, rather, SISDUK endeavors to stimulate local people to organize themselves as a way of improving their development capacities [5].

### Figure 3 the Link between SISDUK and Musrenbang

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SISDUK</th>
<th>Musrenbang</th>
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<tr>
<td>Local Government Agency’s Budget/Services/Facilities</td>
<td>Plans of District Government Agencies/Units (A planning forum of SKPD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordination Team Meeting</td>
<td>Forum of Dev. Planning at village level (<em>Musrenbang Tk Desa/Kelurahan</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Based Planning (PRA) at the group level</td>
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Note: Planning → Budget/Services/Facilities Provision ← Plan Feedback
PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal
SKPD: *Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah* (Local Government Units)

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**Figure 3 the Link between SISDUK and Musrenbang**
As illustrated in the model of SISDUK Community Empowerment (see Fig. 5), SISDUK is a system to support the delivery and reception of development resources for local community empowerment in Takalar District. In general, the characteristics of the SISDUK empowerment model include the following:

a. Placing local people and communities as the primary subject of development with the main focus on improving resource management capabilities on the basis of learning processes. To obtain these capabilities, SISDUK has tried to strengthen 3 main aspects required in the process of fulfilling community’s needs such as the utilization of local resources, the development of organizations as the main medium of collective action in managing such resources and lastly the improvement of social norms or regulations relating to the management and utilization of such resources (see Fig. 5 Box 1);

b. The collaborative efforts amongst all relevant stakeholders to provide resources and services to facilitate the enabling process for the local people and communities through SISDUK procedures and mechanisms (see Fig. 5 Box 3);

c. Integrating a planning and community organising process through social preparation. SISDUK has created a supplementary framework through which the planning process at the grassroots levels is also used to organise collective actions at a locality (see Fig. 5 Box 2 and also Fig. 3);

d. Emphasising heavily on the process of improving community capabilities rather than on the achievement of financial and physical targets as measurements of the performance of empowering programs.

Unlike other alternative local planning processes adopted by other areas in Indonesia in the era of decentralization such as Musyawarah Perencanaan Kegiatan Tahunan (The consultation on planning of Annual Development) in Bandung District [2] and Perencanaan Pembangunan Partisipatif (PPP–participatory development planning) in Solo City [3], SISDUK has distinctively created a participatory planning mechanism that shows a strong and direct link to the improvement of organizing capabilities of local communities as illustrated in Box 1. From the model and characteristics of empowerment framework applied as briefly mentioned above, SISDUK seems to explore the features of procedural justice and social learning in strengthening planning and managerial capacities of local communities to mobilize resources required for their sustainable development activities in Takalar.
In order to examine the capacity of SISDUK to incorporate procedural justice and social learning in its adopted planning process, the following main dimensions require investigation.

a. Procedural justice. Some scholars have suggested the dimensions that can be used to measure procedural justice. These suggestion for example provided by Leventhal (as cited in Lawrence et al. [57]) and Lind et al. [58]. However, special attention should be given to the works of Hillier [59] who tried to develop procedural justice constructs in the context of planning processes. In Hillier’s work aiming to examine the degree of public participation in local planning decision making carried by the state of Western Australia, there are two main sets of components of procedural justice. These sets are further broken down into some sub components. The first set is procedural components which consist of fairness, voice, information, consistency and impartiality, feedback and process control. Meanwhile the second one is interactional components which are composed of respect and dignity.

b. Social learning. For this variable, there are three main dimensions to be looked at. The first one is a deliberative process to observe the capacities of a planning process to facilitate conducive interaction and meaningful reflection amongst involved participants [60], [61], [62]. Next is cognitive enhancement to evaluate the ability of a planning process to facilitate collective learning relating to the enhancement of cognitive aspects i.e. knowing, learning and understanding the required technical competence, values and collective preferences. Lastly is moral development to assess whether a planning process is able to facilitate learning processes relating to the development of moral aspects i.e. ethical judgement on what is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable as well as putting aside self interests) [63], [64], [65].

These dimensions constitute the explanatory variables of the self organizing capabilities (the dependent variables), which can be examined from changes in their characteristics such as collective assets/resources, collective knowledge and skills, collective belief and attitudes, leadership quality, and relation or networking with others people/groups/institutions [16], [25], [27], though these are not easy outcomes to measure.

It is also advisable to examine the impact of these variables on material outcomes achieved by local communities. This is equally important since measuring these outcomes can validate empowerment analysis [16]. Observing the results of empowerment especially in terms of material improvement and distributional equity of the targeted segments of community is also relevant given that in many cases this becomes the crucial issues especially for those expecting the improvement of life quality in terms of enhanced material fulfillment such as income, shelter, clothing, education attainment and health circumstances.
7. Conclusion
Enhancing self-organizing capabilities of local communities is urgent for the sustainability of development programs particularly in the era of decentralized Indonesia. This can be done by improving the quality of public involvement in local decision making especially in the participatory local planning processes. It has been indicated in this paper that musrenbang as the adopted local planning mechanism that has been applied by most of local governments in Indonesia has had some fundamental limitations to support the improvement of these community’ capacities. To overcome this, it has also been advised that procedural justice and social learning approaches are relevant to be used as frameworks to improve local planning processes. To examine this proposal, future research will be conducted, taking a local empowerment program involved in SISDUK as an object of the study. The model and characteristics of this program seem to provide scope to explore the incorporation of procedural justice and social learning in its applied planning process. Such research should be able to evaluate how far planning processes have contributed to the achievement of number of identified factors associated with procedural justice and social learning and their subsequent impact on the improvement of self-organizing capabilities of local communities to implement local development programs sustainably and enhance material wellbeing.

References


