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Centralized Local Development versus Localized Central Arrangement in Village Autonomy Policy Implementation in Indonesia

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Abstract. Amidst fluctuate central-local governmental relations, extended decentralization policy to village level prompt discourses as to whether the policy could exploit local wisdom within which villages are supposedly develop. This article aims at explaining implications of centralized local development in Indonesia and which ways the village governments and communities exploit local wisdoms to implement localized central arrangement under the 2014 Village Law. A qualitative case study in two villages in two special autonomous provinces in Indonesia representing rich traditional culture-based tourism respectively is conducted. Data is gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with some key informants and document analyses. Following that, the article argues that reciprocal relations between local wisdom and practices of village autonomy are lacking, whereby organic and traditional values are not compatible with modern and formal bureaucratic nature of village governance. Village apparatuses has rather sought for satisfying local development accountability than incorporating existing local wisdom therein. While the 2014 Village Law requires each village to integrate local wisdom living naturally in villages, its standardized procedures render them to shift their accountability from supposedly held to local people to municipal governments. This makes centralization of local development happened by and within local governments under localized administrative arrangements imposed by the central government.

Keywords: decentralization policy, community empowerment, local wisdom, rural development, village autonomy

INTRODUCTION

The long walk towards democracy in Indonesia began in 1998 where the country moved from a very centralized model of development and patron-client network towards a more decentralized type in terms of central-local governmental relations and a more democratic sense regarding state – society relation (Hoessein, 2011; Prasojo, Maksum, Kurniawan, 2006). The centralized model was applied and reflected the central-local government relation, with development guidelines provided and mandated to be used by all government agencies at national and local level. Post Suharto’s regime, famously known as the Reform Era (Era Reformasi), the central – local government relation is characterized by the so-called “big bang” decentralization (Ahmad and Mansoor, 2002; Rudy, Heryandi, and Khoiriah, 2017). The “big bang” refers to a drastic power distribution shift from authoritarian to democratic regime. One of the major shifts in power distribution is reflected in the Law 32/2004 in lieu of Law 22/1999 on Local Government that mandates more autonomies for local government to regulate and manage public affairs in their areas of jurisdiction. The enactment of this particular law has secured scholarly optimistic views on the impact of decentralized budget and bureaucratic practice towards more customized communal public service provisions.
Distributed authorities and administrative functions remain a conundrum for Indonesia. After several years of implementation, there are more local governments that maintain status quo without any reform or innovation than those that attempt better local governance. We can see it, for instance, from the government agency performance accountability index published annually by the Ministry of Administrative Reform (MAR, Kementerian Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi), in which the number of local governments achieved the score of A and BB (good) is much fewer than those achieved B and lower (Ministry of Administrative Reform, 2019). The identified problems include unstandardized public services quality amongst local governments, low public participation, and even wider spread of corruptive practices (Kirana, 2014).

Despite those problems, the central government expands the autonomy to the lowest administrative level, the village level, through the Law 6/2014 on Village. The Village Law 6/2014 is underpinned by a presumption that the original local autonomy belongs to villages within which indigenous wisdom manifested by the locals is entrenched. This constellation implies on senses and ways the village is governed under a given politico-administrative regime in Indonesia. That is why existing Local Government Law 23/2014 (and the 9/2015 revised version as well) is underrated out of any clauses considered within the Village Law. We also agree with Antlöv, Wetterberg, and Dharmawan (2016) that perceive a premise from which the 2014 Village Law depart. As they put it, there is a need for strengthening local democracy that is entrenched in local people participation and local wisdom while increasing quality of village development based on accountability mechanism within that village governance. Nevertheless, administrative arrangement to achieve these two policy goals give weight more on the latter. The national government has set up standardized procedures of village expenditure management in similar ways to those imposed to the provincial and municipal governments.

These situations have led to a pro- and counter-debates in terms of the position and the implementation of village governance (Yasin et al., 2015). While the law stems from an assumption that an empowered village is a significant solution to improve public service and participation at the grass-root level, the empirical side of the law provides a contrast result. The grounds for the argument are not limited to quasi-monopoly of executing agency at the village level, but also to that at the central level for the two implementing agencies, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA, Kementerian Dalam Negeri) and the Ministry of Village and Least Developed Areas and Transmigration (MVilDAT, Kementerian Desa dan Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal dan Transmigrasi), have not been able to do proper coordination with regards to village autonomy (Suyatno, 2015).

In theoretical discourses, the positive contribution of indigenous knowledge and local tradition/wisdom within rural developments stem from socio-cultural prevalence of village communities (Vel and Bedner, 2015). Local wisdom is believed as a form of the way of life in which wisdom refers to crystallization of past experiences that form the stock of knowledge and praxis that is considered prudent and wise to various communities. The wisdom and policies look at the appearance of the anticipatory, adaptive, and abilities of various life issues (see, for instance, Rahman et al. (2020). Previous study in Thailand demonstrates the significant impacts to the development of the local community by using customs and culture to run the agricultural production process, which is based on the concept of self-sufficiency and self-reliance (Sungkharat et al., 2010). In Indonesian context, local wisdom might occur in the form of education and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. The existence and continuity of the forms of local wisdom in society manifest in some tangible rituals prayers in the intention of giving better effect to the community is located (Simon and Himawan, 2020; see also Hutagalung and Indrajat, 2020 in a disaster context).

The village serves as a realm to nurture and manifest indigenous values and local wisdom of the community both in sociological and administrative terms. From sociological viewpoint, the values originally were a source of inspiration which accumulate into local wisdom, the determinant of activities of the village community, and also served as the underlying basic knowledge for policy formulation and implementation at village level. From community social aspect, the characteristics of village community, which are generally known for its strong implementation of collectivism (gotong royong) and communal life values (Simanjuntak et al., 1979) can serve as a foundation to implement public participation in order to support village autonomy implementation. Village is considered an autonomous institution with deeply rooted traditions, customs, and norms (Lutfia, 2013). Consistently, Kushandajani (2015) found that most villages in Indonesia serve as a locus and the genuine subject of autonomy over social capital i.e. culture and collective (paguyuban) community typology. Along with modernization and urbanization, currently these values are undergoing degradation in quality. However, the manifestation of those values does not disappear; instead, the measures to strengthen their preservation in local development implementation are becoming even stronger. This shows that the existences of an informal convention pertaining to the implementation of village affairs are basically oriented toward local resources empowerment-based development (Aziz, 2016).

From public administration point of view, Gayatri
(2009) argues for two perspectives of the ontology of a village. First, it is a state creation of administrative function. Second, it is an entity that formed naturally in a kinship-based society. Most of villages in Indonesia exist based on this kinship relation. The same argument stated by Sosialismanto (2001), “villages used to be attributed with ‘authentic’ culture that represented traditional economic modes of production (that is, agricultural societies, fishing communities, etc.); and at the same time followed a set of traditions that served as a worldview and a guide for the interactions among its community members.” Therefore, a village naturally has ability in governing social life and economic affairs in terms of creating social norms and values, informal regulations, and even some villages have communities that voluntarily develops several economic empowerment programs for villagers.

The aforementioned literature emphasizes inter-governmental balance of authorities between central and local government. Little is known about a crucial issue that emerges as a repercussion of the law relates to the village’s unique characteristics and their capacity to rise as a part of the country’s formal governing structure. On one side, positions and roles of villages in developing countries are undermined within grand national development plan. Coordination line and span of control across government levels range from government ministries (central government) to province government and subsequently turn to city/regency government with further implementation at sub-district (kecamatan) and neighborhood (kelurahan) levels, to which village is equivalent for rural areas. This scheme has already made villages get undermined. On the other side, village contain a laying bed for cultivating the most genuine of socio-cultural prevalence of traditions and knowledge, from which local democracy is manifested and collective action for public service provision is undertaken by the locals. Prior to establishments of formal structure of sub-districts, villagers have organized themselves for internal affairs.

Central government in Indonesia attempted to upscale rural development through policy intervention to authority jurisdictions of local governments—i.e. centralized local development. Yet, prevailing policies before the Law 6/2014 on Law have been insufficient in addressing problems of rural development, let alone empowering villagers or ensuring self-governance manifestation. The Law 6/2014 regulates village governance to be self-regulating, self-managing, hence, to be self-reliance. Thus, it reaffirms basic and real sovereignty of the local people underpinned by wisdoms along with manifestation of good governance in Hazenberg’s (2016) conception.

The logical consequence of this formal inclusion is what is known as the connectivity principle. Based on this principle, the transfer of power warrants the opportunity to obtain resources. According to the data from the Ministry of Finance (2017, 2020), as much as IDR60 trillion (or USD4.3 billion equivalent in 2020) have been distributed to 74,954 villages—leaving out other 3 villages behind the allocation) in Indonesia. These numbers have increased for 2020 to IDR72 trillion (USD5.1 billion equivalent). According to the data, villages receive fund in an average amount of IDR960 million (USD68,000) each for the implementation of the 2014 Village Law. Consequently, these figures raise an issue of village apparatus capacity to manage the fund in accountable and transparent manners. This issue pivots around the ability and willingness of the village apparatus to involve the community in designing development policies and programs customized to the community’s needs.

A counterproductive measure applies here. Prasojo (2015) and Valentina and Putera (2013) suggest that virtues generated from local wisdoms, especially when they get self-governance institutionalized, contain higher driver to ensure integrity against corruptive behaviors. Nevertheless, application of administrative and procedural matters by the village without adaptive learning process to meet formal administrative procedure and local wisdom is contradictory to the traditional, informal and organic characteristics of the community way of doing things. With the existence of local values and formalization of administrative and financing mechanism, it becomes necessary to review the issue of village self-reliance in sustainable manner. Village autonomy carries along a demand for villages to become self-reliant through optimization of village-generated income with the utilization of local resources. This constitutes a rationale for village autonomy which also provides a solution for village community to get rid of the trap of natural resources exploitation, as well as the trap of consumerism for village community throughout the ongoing modernization and urbanization (Prasojo et al., 2012; Sujito, 2006).

This article seeks to explain implications resulted from that centralized local development and which ways the village governments and communities exploit local wisdoms to implement the 2014 Village Law. By the use of case study of two cultural tourism villages in special autonomous provinces—Yogyakarta and Aceh, Indonesia—the main argument in this study is that reciprocal relations between local wisdom and the practice of village autonomy are lacking, whereby organic and traditional values are not compatible with modern and formal bureaucratic nature of village governance. Village government has rather sought for satisfying local development accountability than incorporating existing local wisdom therein. These accountability attempts are directed to municipal governments under administrative arrangements imposed by the central government. Following this introductory section, a research approach and protocols of data inquiry processing as well as data analysis is explained. Subsequently, a brief explanation of cases in two villages under investigations and discuss these results against the research problems are provided before the conclusion and some remarks on lesson-learned on the issues.
**RESEARCH METHOD**

This research applies qualitative approach to explore prevailing circumstances of relations between local wisdom and traditional bureaucratic practice in two culture-rich tourism villages in Indonesia. The results from this exploration is used to explain implications of centralized local development and which ways the village governments and communities exploit local wisdoms to implement localized central arrangement under the 2014 Village Law. There are abundant amounts of literature discussing rural developments, decentralization of authorities from central to local governments, village governance. Nevertheless, little have been found about the relations between village governance under fluctuate decentralization policy and the cultivation of local wisdom that drives rural development. This qualitative research attempts to fill in this theoretical gap with an emphasis on unique focus and locus of the study fields, which makes our research a comparative inferential across cases.

This study uses two villages as cases in point to represent the predominant local wisdom whereby one with a strong Javanese and the other with Acehnese cultures. The former is Wukirsari’s Giriloyo Batik Village located in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province and the latter is Gampong Nusa Village in Aceh Province. Wukirsari Village in Yogyakarta Province represents a strong Javanese cultural values, one of which is reflected in traditional batik management. According to Indarmaji (1983), traditional batik pattern in Indonesia mostly describe the monumental in nature and their surroundings. It was also becoming the imagination of the religion and beliefs of the usually anonymous creators. Furthermore, this research acknowledges another strong traditional entity in Aceh Province, in west part of Indonesia. Kloos (2017) mentioned that in most construction of Acehnese ethnic identity, the religious identity takes center stage. As well, this province famously refers as “Veranda of Mecca” (Serambi Mekkah) made this place and its people have a special relationship with the Islamic heartland with their own unique virtue such as sharia law. In order to analyze the influence of local wisdom in the village governance, the existing condition in Yogyakarta and Aceh Province are worth-examined more deeply.

Secondary data collection was conducted in April-August 2017 through online searching and with assistance of local partners in Banda Aceh, Aceh, and Bantul, Yogyakarta, whose have close connection with officials of local governments respectively. The risks of potential bias of that interpersonal connectivity can safely be put aside since it was confirmed as a merely collegial relations and the necessary document list kept at the authors hand to make screening of any enquiries to these officials. Communications with village officers for interview appointments are made with the help of the local partners.

The secondary data includes government reports and regulation papers issued within 2010-2014 and 2015-2018 to compare between a period of institutionalized bureaucracy reform and local expenditure management reform undertaken since 2010 and a period after the 2014 Village Law taken into effect. Primary data inquired through fieldworks in both villages by means of semi-structured in-depth interviews with village apparatus, community leaders, village communities, academics, and civil society organizations. Only one source person is picked, whose perceived as representative of interviewed organizations respectively, but the authors encountered considerably disproportionate distribution of overall number of source persons across organizations in the two village sites due to availability of time appointment made, according to the field situations. Nevertheless, this has not be troublesome circumstances since there is different emphasis of village development loci and actors, in which and by whom initiatives of village community empowerment take place. Thus, deficient number of academics for the interview in Desa Wukirsari is not a problem since their opinion are mere complementary, whereas in Gampong Nusa academics contribute considerably to the community empowerment along with those in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

During fieldworks, the authors also collected documents from non-governmental organizations and villages consisting of organization reports and village data sheets. Therefore, consents of each interviewee had been obtained before the interview was conducted.

The interviews focus on issues of local autonomy, particularly village autonomy, village community norms, and community empowerment. One person representing each of these parties are interviewed, as follows: Qualitative data is processed by making open, axial, and selective coding based on several main issues regarding village governance, village communities, and local wisdom. Data is processed manually without using any digital applications, except the uses of Microsoft Word to write transcriptions and subsequently Microsoft Excel to tabulate and map the information inquired from transcribed interview systematically.

In order to strengthen data validity, triangulation is done through transcribing source persons’ statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Desa Wukirsari (1 person each)</th>
<th>Gampong Nusa (1 person each)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal government agencies</td>
<td>1. Local development planning agency</td>
<td>1. Culture and tourism agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Community and village empowerment agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Culture and tourism agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village governance</td>
<td>1. Village chief secretary</td>
<td>1. Gampong chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Village assembly council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local community &amp; NGOs</td>
<td>The Giriloyo batik village manager</td>
<td>1. Co-founder of Nuse Creative Community (NCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lead member of Kemitraan (NGO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>1. Sociology of Universitas Syah Restu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Public administration expert of State Islamic University An-Najah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Categories and distribution of interviewed source persons in Aceh and Yogyakarta
from one to another and match information gathered from secondary data. This is followed by addressing the given problematic situation of each case. Finally, a general conclusion is drawn based on the similarity and differences between trends and the interplay of issues under investigation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of Village Law attracts scholarly discussion about the compatibility of this regulation with the natural characteristics of village community life. The Village Law is very clear on the objective, that is to increase village autonomy in managing their domestic affairs. However, autonomy given to villages not only depends on the modes of production or economy, but also on the interaction among institutions, particularly between villages and supra-village institutions (municipality, province, and ministry). At this point, pros and cons debates of the issuance of the Village Law raise to examine whether the formal regulation brings positive or negative impacts to village life. In normative terms, Phahlevy (2016) find that the 2014 Village Law regulates decentralization of rights and authorities to village governance. Indigenous values underpinning local wisdom articulated by villagers are all recognized by the 1945 Constitution, specifically in the Article 18B paragraph 2. Nevertheless, the central government tends to intervene these indigenous setting hence unifying the prevailing socio-cultural diversity of villages in managing their affairs.

Against the normative view mentioned above, Syukri et al. (2017) pinpoint interesting empirical features of implementing the 2014 Village Law that the law implementation’s performance varies across villages. Villagers’ needs to get less accommodated by the village government, whereas assigned facilitators coming from outside the village have not optimally assisted the implementation of village governance. A somewhat confusing finding is suggested by Salim et al. (2017). As they put it, four factors determine village head manifest local democracy stemmed from villagers’ active citizenship. Two determine the most are respectively ability to fit with local values and willingness and commitment. In contrast, the least ones are the openness to new values and teamwork at an equal level. We need to highlight these four determinants. The two most determining factors are well understood, and they confirm that local wisdom stemmed in indigenous values and political will are indispensable for sound village governance. The two least determining factors means the counterproductive effect of attachment of the village to the people’s values while less receptive to incoming new values hence substantiating inward-looking development orientation. Moreover, out of these two, the most surprising is lacking implication of teamwork on successful self-management of the village. Indonesians are renowned for their indigenous virtue of gotong-royong (collective responsibility) supposed to invigorate teamwork, even by making such pro bono contributions.

Departing from that, this study attempts to provide better inferences by showcasing two cases situated in provinces having special autonomous attributes, which expectedly preserve indigenous values and local wisdom in governance and development practices. The two case studies presented below will elaborate on circumstances between the practice of village governance and local wisdom to achieve village self-reliance.

The Case of Giriloyo Batik Village

In the context of local wisdom, traditional values in each village is typically formed from inter-cultural acculturation, and often is assimilation between traditional and religious values of local community. The culture of batik (the traditional art of producing and decorating fabrics, UNESCO, n.d; Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, n.d) has made a vibrant local value in Wukirsari Village. It has been passed down across generations in centuries. The batik culture was passed down by the daughters of the Yogyakarta Sultans and the Court (Keraton) families & relatives, who faced difficulty in obtaining the fabrics they needed during the construction of the tombs of Yogyakarta kings in Imogiri area. The far distance between the palace and the king tombs made the Sultanate of Yogyakarta came to a decision to open and share the knowledge on raw batik processing to the people. The practice of raw batik making went on until 1985 in Wukirsari. Due to a rather poor quantity of sensitization and learning sessions, the people of Wukirsari could only produce batik as a raw material at low selling price from 1986 to 2005.

The Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006 became a turning point for the people of Wukirsari Village, from which point they initiated and designed a specific batik brand of Wukirsari. The Giriloyo Batik Village (Kampung Batik Giriloyo) is an area populated by considerable number of batik makers the most in Wukirsari Village. It has subsequently grown as a batik center that develops production mechanisms, design varieties, as well as material diversities in the village as well as manages to increase the production of batik. With the supports and initiatives of the local people and from several NGOs and private funds, Giriloyo Village has extended to batik-making learning facilities, ranging from batik-making workshops package to homestays, for tourists who visit the village.

The transformation of Giriloyo Batik Village in Wukirsari Village as a cultural tourism destination was formalized with the issuance of Decree of Bantul Regent 157B/2008—followed by the Decree 63/2009—which set forth Wukirsari Village as one of the thirty-seven Tourism Villages in Bantul. The appointment of Wukirsari Village as a tourism village further shows the government’s measure to contribute in the development of village community, both structurally and institutionally. However, throughout
entire process of establishing Giriloyo Batik Village in Wukirsari, we have found no direct involvement or contribution of village apparatus or local government, except facilitating communication for the sake of marketing establishments of griya (exhibition showcase) and connecting networks with interested parties, which are initiated by the batik community groups. All initiatives came from the community and is self-reliant. Up to date, the Giriloyo Batik Village is managed by a group of batik makers who sell their artworks at the griya by taking turns. This includes distribution of profit from the management down to the labours.

Data triangulation across source persons shows lack of evidence of considerable relations between village autonomy that promises self-reliance and village prosperity attainment by the village government. In addition to this inference, a management representative of the griya suggests that village apparatus have not seen tourism potentials in the village, otherwise village apparatus would have allocated village fund for their development and involved them into the process. There is indeed the Village Development Planning Meeting (Musyawarah Rencana Pembangunan Desa—abbreviated known as musrenbangdes), which was touted by many as a good platform to channel people’s aspiration to the policy makers at village level. Unfortunately, like many other municipality’s formal assemblies participating by citizen, such a forum is nothing but a mere formality. Some feedbacks received from a management member of Giriloyo Batik Village, including the use of village fund for developing the batik village, such as road reconstruction and provision of health facilities, had not come to implementation by the village apparatus. It was only then in 2018 such developments of physical infrastructure and education facilities come to realization. Notwithstanding, the village budget allocation in 2018 has not focused on aspects related to core business of community empowerment in fields of batik village tourism. Therefore, harnessing rural development, especially the increase of prosperity levels of villagers, do not determined by autonomy status granted to a village. Instead, Giriloyo Batik Village becomes a showcase that the village government needs more institutional efficacy to succeed the socio-economic development therein.

The Case of Gampong Nusa

The similar condition is found in Gampong Nusa, Province of Aceh. Gampong Nusa is one of two tourism villages in Aceh Besar district. The local values remain vibrant and transformed into a dominant push factor in developing the tourism village into a creative village in the future. Gampong Nusa offers beautiful natural landscape combined with strong Acehnese traditions, such as the preservation of local arts namely the traditional dances Ranup Lampuan and Rapa’i Geleng, as well as Aceh typical cuisines, such as Siereubeh, Udung Kumeh, Kwah Pihu, and Kuah On Murong, Peungai, and Asam Sunti. These traditional arts and culinary are integral parts of local accommodation service available for tourists in a form of temporary homestay, living with villagers. Tourists are expected to gain living experience with the locals and learn about the traditions therein. Alongside this accommodation program, there is another option for tourists to do camping in natural open environment nearby. Nevertheless, as our source person from NCC elucidate, the camping program was suspected of its potential means for dating and free sex, which violate the tradition and sharia-based laws. NCC as the organizer got warned from Tuha Peut Gampong, a traditional yet formally institutionalized village society leader boards, regulated under the Provincial Law or Qanun 5/2003. It should compromise and negotiated with Tuha Peut Gampong for a win-win solution without breaking the traditional, sharia-based rules in that local youths take in charge for regular oversights. Prevailing values beneath these traditional customs and arts represent indigenous messages across generations to hold tight sharia-based traditions and giving respects to others, including outsiders. Not only are these messages pave an outline of resilient development vision based on the post-Helsinki peace agreement, but they also relevant for tourism purposes.

Gampong Nusa started to gain wide recognition since 2015 from local and national governments and international donor organizations. This achievement was pioneered by NCC in 2005 in the aftermath of the post-tsunami reconstruction in Aceh. The women’s initiatives in Gampong Nusa emerge over the increasingly alarming waste problem. A waste bank was established with the support of many NGOs that present to help with the reconstruction. The Islamic values that promote hygiene has become a significant motive for the waste bank movement in Gampong Nusa.

The issue of women representation in village development also came as an attractive issue in Aceh in general, and in Gampong Nusa in particular. Discriminations against women is still common due to the interpretation of the sharia law, which severely limits women to be actively involved in village development process in Aceh. It is responsible for the absence of women representative in village apparatus structure, as well as the absence of women involvement in village community, even during a discussion on women issues. This has motivated some women activists in Gampong Nusa to be more active in advocating their aspirations, particularly one pertaining to gampong (village) development and the establishment of the tourism village.

The Nusa Creation Community (NCC) was established in 2007 as the focal point of tourism development in Gampong Nusa. It was then institutionalized into Nusa Management Institution (Lembaga Pengelolaan Nusa/LPN) that organizes preparation of homestay, establishment of Al-Hayah art school, fishing tourism in Sungai Nusa, and Geng Gari Nusa activities. Gampong Nusa’s progress as a
tourism village that gained more popularity in Aceh was not without any challenge. One of its founders said that in the initial period after its establishment, some villagers rejected the development idea because the term ‘tourism village’ had a negative connotation to them. As mentioned earlier, part of the society associated it to opening up space for inappropriate activities that might violate traditional and religious conventions. However, the negative connotation seemed to be diminishing recently after NCC addressed the concern and sustain Gampong Nusa as a tourism destination that offers acculturated of Islamic values and Acehnese tradition as its theme.

The socio-cultural prevalence in Gampong Nusa and its development into a tourism village has not affected the implementation of village autonomy taken into effect under the Law 6/2014. Village autonomy implementation has gone separately from the development of tourism area in Gampong Nusa. The village fund obtained from Gampong Nusa gets allotted only for infrastructure building and not benefitting back for the development of community self-reliance. In fact, the management of Gampong Nusa have rejected any decree issued by the province government on its establishment as a tourism village. The reason behind this rejection is to prevent the village from intervention and unilateral claim by local government over the progress that have taken place in the village.

Realtions Between Village Development and Village Governance

The dominant Javanese values such as collectivism (gotong royong) and harmony are incorporated into village government implementation, which generally makes the people reluctant to express critical opinion to the government at all levels. The value of collectivism (gotong royong) is, however, slowly fading away with the increase in village autonomy and village fund. The village fund is considered as a sufficient means to finance village activities, hence making collectivism obsolete. People have felt that they were not involved in the development and implementation of village programs, resulted in ignorance and unwillingness to participate in village-level activities. For instance, in the infrastructure program in Wukirsari Village. Before the implementation of Village Autonomy Policy, villager had responsibility to collectively develop village road and there was sharing idea and fund among them. Since the implementation of Village Autonomy, this collective activity does not exist because villager tend to think that village road development can be funded by village fund and thus collective activity is no more needed in this case.

This phenomenon also found in Gampong Nusa, Aceh, where community perceives village autonomy belongs to the elite of the community. The lack of community engagement by village government generated apathetic attitudes among the village community towards the ongoing programs due to the arbitrary decisions on programs which are not in line with the community’s previously expressed aspiration.

The poor level of the community awareness to participate also affected the program development and implementation. In general, formalization of government implementation at village level weakens the implementation of local values since the government focuses more on procedural and administrative aspects rather than the substance of village governance.

Community empowerment programs that originated purely from the community’s ideas and interests are more sustainable as compared to ones initiated by the government. As an example, Gampong Nusa in Aceh Province, which developed its waste management program since 2005 as its own initiative, has succeeded in sustaining the program until present day, and serves as best practice for other villages in Aceh Province and other provinces. Overtime, Gampong Nusa transformed itself into a “tourism village”, which offers local culture and product as a tourism destination. The program sustainability in the village is said to be the result of absence of government intervention. The community also made decision to “keep distance” from the government. This is conducted upon reason that they want all programs implemented therein to be based upon the community’s real need, instead of project-based like what is often found in government programs.

Unlike what experienced by village community in Gampong Nusa, Aceh, community empowerment program in form of establishment of “tourism village” in Yogyakarta Province was initiated by the regency government, by involving community as a part of the Tourism Care Group (Kelompok Sadar Wisata). Based on the Ministry of Tourism Regulation 4/2008 on Tourism Awareness, Yogyakarta Province Government established the Tourism Care Group programs in every regency under this province. Through the establishment of the group, representative of each village was assigned to explore and identify the local potentials and values, which were then manifested in the tourism village.

The intersection between legal-formal framework of the 2014 Village Law and village self-reliance upon local values and resources manifest in the village community empowerment, which was initiated and managed by the villagers themselves (Damayanti, Soeady, and Ribawanto, 2014; Rimawati, 2015; Sujali, 2008). Other implication with the formalization and standardization of village government evaluation is the deadlock of innovation and empowerment program ideas that come from the village community local values. The standardization of evaluation set forth by the central government has made village government to focus more on administrative and procedural accountability, while at the same time puts aside the programs that are in line with local values.

Likewise, inferred from these findings, Valentina, Putera, and Irawati’s (2019) claim is thus re-affirmed, that even in well-established regions, in which village governance structure has stemmed in and even got institutionalized upon rich traditional, indigenous local wisdom, the governing process has been
counterproductive. While the institution ensures self-governance, its strengthening tends to renegotiate regulatory frameworks imposed by the national government. This circumstance becomes challenging to regency and province government governments as well. It also subsequently opens for a possibility of central-local miscoordination in development.

Village government officers lack technical capacity to meet standardized procedure imposed by the central government. Moreover, village expenditure management are under tighter scrutiny of the municipal governments, in which they are held accountability to both provincial and national governments. Furthermore, village governments tend to prioritize physical development rather than human resources development, upon the pretext that physical development is easier to be held accountable for and the result can directly benefit the community. It becomes an irony when some segments of community do not feel the need of such a physical development. This is especially true when the standardization conducted by the national government imposes detailed technical guidelines for budget use, which made some village governments feel anxious in managing the village fund. This technical guidance even makes village officers focus more on administrative things than substantive activities for village development. The provision of technical guidance by central government without direct assistances to village officer brings difficulties to them. Moreover, there is huge gap among village officers in Indonesia in terms of capacity and capability to follow that guidance in governing village.

CONCLUSION

The 2014 Village Law opens opportunities and challenges in the implementation of village autonomy. The opportunity for obtaining higher degree of autonomy in governing the village affairs exist hand in hand with challenges in increasingly sizeable autonomous space and an additional revenue source, such as the village fund incurred from the state budget. However, challenges occur in the lack of capacity in managing village government and the departure from formal and bureaucratic administrative arrangements towards a localized approach that get adjusted and even justified by local wisdoms in villages. We argue that reciprocal relations between local wisdom and the practice of village autonomy are lacking, whereby organic and traditional values are not compatible with modern and formal bureaucratic nature of village governance. Village government has rather sought for satisfying formal accountability of local development to municipal governments under administrative arrangements imposed by the central government than incorporating existing local wisdom therein. As such, the existing local wisdom that supposedly get revived under the village autonomy regime remains distant from the government practice.

Lessons learned from Wukirsari Village and Gampong Nusa show a non-existent direct connection between local wisdom with village governance. The success story of the Wukirsari’s Giriloyo Batik Village, Yogyakarta, is initiated and governed by a community based on existing local wisdom without considerable supports from the village apparatus. The absence of village government intervention also found in Gampong Nusa, Aceh. This village has successfully transformed itself into a tourism village focusing on local art heritage from Aceh traditions by marking their distance from the village and municipal governments’ interventions to their agendas. Local wisdoms in the two cases are manifested in self-initiated development programs and does not necessarily relate to institutional capacity or autonomy status granted to the villages. The cases show that village programs sustain when there is limited government intervention.

Any technical deficiencies suffered by the villages are not merely technocratic matters. The implementation of the 2014 Village Law deals with a certain institutional setting of centralized bureaucratization of village development administration and the use of the village fund. This centralization mode is typical of tendencies of authority recentralization under the feet of the central government, which are attributed within the Local Government Law 23/2014. This way, tightened procedure standardization of governing the villages imposed by any related ministries are the general norms. This situation upscales higher dependency of village governments to the municipal governments in terms of technical assistance and open for possible administrative misconducts. The utmost problematic democracy practice against the initial normative arguments underpinning the 2014 Village Law is shifting accountability of village government from supposedly held to local people to the municipal governments. This makes centralization of local development happened by and within local governments under localized administrative arrangements imposed by the central government.

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