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Empowerment, Participation, and Gender Equality within PNPM-Mandiri Pedesaan : Rhetoric and Reality

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Empowerment, participation and gender equality within PNPM-Mandiri Perdesaan: rhetoric and reality

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INTRODUCTION

The language of the global development discourse or "*developmentspeak*" should be analysed critically (Cornwall 2010). Transferring academic and technocratic phrases to the field often comes with its own perils. This is especially true in the case of Indonesia where Anglophone dominated buzzwords often become imposed like stamps of approval. Many more of these terms become loan words, closely associating the project with the external agency which prescribed them. "*La Langue de bois*" the language of evasion, observed by Rist (2010, p.4), uses such buzzwords to blur and substitute real meaning with an "absence of real definition" and a strong "normative belief in what the notion is supposed to bring about". A buzzword gains power through being vague and inoffensive, yet also having a capacity to hold a number of different possible meanings, and importantly, doing so while reflecting a normative lustre (Cornwall 2010). It is these qualities which not only deliver power to buzzwords but also leave them vulnerable to being distorted and used as tools for political agendas rather than for genuinely progressive social movements. This paper examines the extent to which the terms and values of PNPM-Mandiri Rural,[2] such as "empowerment", "participation", and "genderequality"; reflect either rhetoric or reality within a particular village context in Indonesia.

The term *empowerment* entered the development vocabulary in the 1970s. In general the term encompasses a process of enhancing individual or group capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (Gibson &Woolcock 2008). The groups, individuals, processes and methods involved, can also vary depending on the context. While originating as a primarily political concept, SrilathaBatliwala sees *empowerment* as a term which has since been lifted out of its original cultural, political and historical context and distorted into the "mainstreamed" formulas of widespread planning (Batliwala 2007, p.557). Mainstreaming can be dangerous to the

[1] He took part in an internship program in Institute for Research and Empowerment (IRE) Yogyakarta in 2011.
[2] This paper focuses on the rural development programs within the "National Program for Community Empowerment" *Program NasionalPemberdayaanMasyarakat* (PNPM-Mandiri) in Indonesia.

process of empowerment, especially when translating the terminto different contexts. From an Indonesian perspective, the term is seen as deriving from a Western struggle for power context; see Prijono & Pranarka(1996). When translated from empowerment to *pemberdayaan* within an Indonesian setting, the term carries a meaning more reminiscent of an enabling process of human development (Sulistiyani 2004, p.78). This clear difference in context and meaning demonstrates the inherent danger of implementing a formulaic plan, with the tagline *empowerment.* The resulting policy may overlook the contextual and culturally diverse meanings of the term. Such mainstreaming has resulted in the dilution of empowerment from a process of both social and human development towards a newfound economic focus. Pointing towards the case study of India, Batliwala recounts how the once powerful idea and practice of women's empowerment became "a set of largely apolitical, technocratic and narrow interventions" (Batliwala 2007, p.559). This resulted in outcomes which fell far short of the multi-faceted social transformation towards gender equality envisioned by early women's movement leaders.Now the term has become ever-more closely associated with a results-oriented process of rapid economic development. Such trends can be seen as part of a wider background of disenchantment resulting from the failure of various "magical recipes for development" (Serra &Stiglitz 2008). These programs which often rely on formal structures of technocratic planning are so focused on showing quantifiable results and reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that they often disengage from the processes of social and human development. Technocratic planning frameworks more frequently shift agency towards professional intermediaries (lawyers, NGO activists, policy specialists) and away from marginalised women and communities (Batliwala 2007, p.559).

In the case of Indonesia, the renaming of the World Bank's, "*Kecamatan* (sub-district) Development Program" *Program PengembanganKecamatan* (*PPK*) to the "National Program for Community Empowerment" *Program NasionalPemberdayaanMasyarakat* (PNPM-Mandiri),[3] was closely aligned with the lead up to the 2009 electoral campaign of SusiloBambangYudhoyono. Initially it seemed that SBY would not win the elections. However, the Yudhoyono government announced a major set of development initiatives to tackle poverty under an umbrella program called the National Program for

[3] PNPM-Rural was announced in 2007 and has been marketed by the SBY administration ever since.

Community Empowerment (PNPM). The program was designed for delivery to village communities throughout the entire country (2011). The resulting widespread popularity of direct cash assistance *bantuanlangsungtunai*(BLT) and PNPM could be seen as a strategic attempt to gain the votes of the public electorate (Perdana& Maxwell 2011). Through promising economic growth and empowerment within an ostensibly new program, or in this case, an old program with a new name, PNPM (in both its rural and urban forms) became a major contributing factor to Yudhoyono's re-election for a second term in 2009 (Perdana& Maxwell 2011).

At the same time, the change of name can be seen as symbolic of the new focus towards terms like empowerment, community-driven development (CDD) and other *developmentspeak* trends promoted by the World Bank. It is important to examine what such repackaging actually means for the realities of implementation of the program. Are genuinely progressive steps being made to raise active participation and a sense of ownership in these projects? Or are these references to "participation", "empowerment" and "poverty reduction" merely a demonstration of rhetoric and normative power? (See Cornwall & Brock 2005, p.1044). Through my interviews with PNPM facilitators at the village and sub-district level, I learned that the change in namefrom*PPK*to PNPM did not correspond to any dramatic transformation in the principles, mechanisms and implementation of the program, yet there were a number of other changes.

Perhaps the most apparent change seen in the transition from *PPK* to PNPM was the scaling-up and shifting ownership of the program. Originally the program was operated by the World Bank, largely outside of Indonesian Government channels. However, PNPM has now become an Indonesian Government Program, which is supported by the World Bank's PSF (PNPM Support Facility).[4]This transition has also seen PNPM expand nationwide. The program now covers 70,000 villages in Indonesia (Prahastanto P 2012 pers. Comm., 24 January).[5] Within our case study, in the South-Central Java district of *Gunungkidul*,[6] the transition came at a time when 30% of the inhabitants lived under

[4] The PNPM Support Facility (PSF) is designed to "support" and oversee the program for community empowerment. The PSF is a subsidiary of the World Bank.
[5]Interview with rural project manager, PNPM Support Facility, (24/1/2012), Jakarta office.
[6]*Gunungkidul** roughly translated as the "Southern Mountains" District is located in *Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* (DIY). There are five districts in total located within the province of DIY including Yogyakarta City, Sleman, Bantul, KulonProgo

the poverty line (Purwaningram 2009).In response to this high level of poverty, PNPM expanded to cover all of the villages throughout the district (Mr.Harno 2012 pers. Comm., 4 January).[7] In terms of program mechanisms, both PNPM and its predecessors have included block grants and small-scale revolving credit programs (Perdana& Maxwell 2011).

What distinguishes PNPM from its predecessor, is a greater focus towards woman's self-help and loan groups *SimpanPinjamPerempuan*(*SPP*), as well as the inclusion of a women's only village meeting or *MusyawarahKhususPerempuan*(*MKP*); and a number of policies which set a minimum[8] on the number of women and members of lower socio-economic groups in attendance at general village and sub-district meetings (Ms.Retno 2012 pers. Comm., 25 January).[9] Such programs reflect a greater emphasis on gender and women's empowerment principles. The resulting PNPM presents itself as a poverty alleviation program, one that emphasises gender equality and participatory forms of decision making and resource allocation. Central to the principles of PNPM is the idea of community-driven development. The concept of community involvement throughout all stages of development is symbolised through the abbreviation of "*DOUM*" or "*dari, oleh, untuk, masyarakat*" which literally translates as "from, by, for, the community". This idea of community driven development and active participation is a notion which was echoed in interviews with PNPM officials at all levels.

> *Community participation in PNPM-Rural… is high. The participation of women in PNPM meetings averaged 45 percent. Nearly 60 percent of those who attend these meetings are from the poorer segments of the community. The 2008 impact evaluation and gender review did find, however, that the PNPM could do much more to promote the participation of women and vulnerable groups.*
>
> (World Bank c.2009).[10]

This rhetoric of active participation of village communities and local institutions has become the guiding principle of empowerment within PNPM. Accordingly it remains important to evaluate the extent to which these claims of active participation are reflected in reality. To what extent can

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and Gunungkidul. Gunungkidul was chosen for this case study since it was the most remote, rural and agricultural context. As a result Gunugkidul had the highest number of PNPM programs. It also has the highest poverty rate with 30% of its inhabitants living under the poverty line (Purwaningram 2009).

[7]Interview with Gunungkidul PNPM District Facilitator (04/1/2012), Bappeda Office.

[8] The policy was set so that the minimum target for women's participation in meetings was 40% according to head of women's collective PKK, Ms.Retno (2012 pers. Comm., 25 January).

[9]Interview with head of women's collective (25/1/2012), Melikanvillage hall.

[10] This is a claim which will be investigated through the investigation of this study.

participation mechanisms within the World Bank funded program, be seen as genuinely inclusive enablers for women's groups and marginalized communities? Does this community-driven development actively involve traditionally marginalised groups in the planning, decision making, implementation and maintenance stages of local village projects? Is decision making power being shifted from central government to local institutions and communities? And, are the conditions genuinely conducive to the encouragement of voice; and building the capacity of local people? Questions such as these are becoming increasingly relevant against the backdrop of a growing critical development literature which sees "participatory principles" being used by neoliberal institutions as a "populist justification for the removal of the state from the economy and its substitution by the market", see Moore (1995), O'Hearn(2001, pp.114-117), and Leal (2010, p.93). It is important to be aware of these dangers which Easterly (2007) observes as resulting from Western oriented "planners" applying mainstreamed strategies to a wide range of development contexts. Through this paper, the key mechanisms and issues involved in raising participation among marginalised women'sand lower-socio economic groups in village meetings will be discussed.This analysis will consider both the positive claims of PNPM-MandiriPerdesaan as well as these more critical perspectives.

In this paper I explore community participation, focusing on women's and lower socio-economic groups as traditionally marginalised communities at the local village context. Community participation within PNPM-Mandiri Rural will be measured not only in terms of the numbers of key stake-holders and community group members attending village meetings. It will also take note of "active participation", that is, the observable voice and agency of these groups.This paper will be set-out as follows: firstly I will provide a brief outline of PNPM's objectives and principles which are most relevant to this study. This will be followed by a brief account of how past women's movements in Indonesia have influenced women's participation in these village meetings today. From here I will give an outline of my methodology. Insights into the village meetings which I attended will then be discussed within this context of women's empowerment.I will proceed to introduce the key factors which induce and inhibit participation. The discussion of how these key factors influence passive and active participation will be analysed alongside evidence from my findings and observations from the

field. Finally, I will outline some of the issues within the program and the resulting implications for women's community participation and empowerment.

Among PNPM's many objectives is the goal of raising the participation of "…all society, especially poor communities and women's groups" (Coordinating Ministry of Social Welfare, 2007, p.11).This objective outlines an aspiration to involve these disadvantaged communities and women's groups within all stages of village development projects. These stagescover areas such as decision making, planning, implementation, and even management and maintenance. It is hoped that raising this participation will result in the institutionalization of a system of participative development within the management of local resources. PNPM's greater focus on women's participation is outlined through the list of normative principles. A belief in "gender equality"is elaborated through a normative statement that there should be equal opportunity for both men and women to participate throughout all of the steps within any given program; and alsoto gain access to the benefits of these development programs (Coordinating Ministry of Social Welfare,2007, p.13).

In order to measure these objectives, principles and claims against the reality of village meetings and development projects, it is important to be aware of the more specific context of women's movements in Java. Women's authority within the sphere of village planning and governance shows great variation across Java. Many studies have been dedicated to the hugely complex evolution of household and family structures and the associated movements towards gender equality. The ways in which these village customs and family relationships affect active community participation differ depending on family laws or *Adat*law. The differences among the 19 studied types of *adat*law, (not all of them patriarchal), are influenced by the clanship of the community concerned (Khanam 2002).

While many of these traditional customs constrain the authority of women's groups in village planning, there have been a number of developments which have challenged these traditional family and gender structures. We can see this through policies such as the *Affirmative Action* law which entered Article 65 of the Indonesian constitution in 2003 (Mulyono 2011). The addition of this article enforces a 30% quota of candidates to be allocated to women representatives in elections throughout all levels of local

and central government (Mulyono 2011). Outside of governmental and legislative change there have been a number of women's movements. In terms of feminism, Indonesia does not lack inspirational leadership figures: DewiSartika and Rasuna Said are just some of those who struggled for equal rights and opportunity throughout the independence movement (Robinson & Bessel 2002, p.5).However, through Suharto's New Order, the importance of these figures, in particular Kartini, in struggling for women's rights, was distorted and negated (Stivens 1998, pp.431-433).The regime's repackaging of "Kartini Day" misrepresented the leader as the very image, of submissive mother and wife, which she had originally fought against (Robinson & Bessel 2002, p.84). Indeed, these clearly defined gender roles and constructed identities associating women with the "domestic sphere" have been one of the more lasting legacies of Suharto's New Order (Sunindyo 1998, p.6). The lingering social constructs which depicted women's "natural" place as apolitical, and as dutiful mothers and wives has been detrimental to women's influence in the public sphere and village planning (Hatley 2002).With the fall of Suharto in 1998, women activists in Indonesia played a substantial role in dismantling the New Order ideology of *state ibuism*(Suryukusa 2004). Yet overall, the result of New Order ideology has been catastrophic for the prospects for women's participation and empowerment in Indonesia. This is especially true within the context of rural development in Java. It is therefore essential to appreciate the history of these women's movements and the evolution of women's roles and identity, in order to truly understand the current context of women's participation in village meetings and PNPM programs in the current context.

In some cases women's groups still experience difficulty in overcoming the social expectations left over by the military regime. In particular within the sphere of village planning, women must continue to persevere in order to gain equal influence and authority. In response to these issues we can see a greater emphasis towards participative development and the empowerment of women's and lower-socio-economic groups; within the objectives, principles and claims of PNPM.

METHODLOGY

In order to evaluate these objectives, principles and claims against the reality of village meetings and development projects, I decided to travel to the context of PNPM Rural in Indonesia. This paper draws upon my fieldwork between September 2011 and February 2012. The field research involved visiting the district of *Gunungkidul* or "Southern Mountains". Here I attended 8 village meetings; visited 6 sub-district offices as well as sitting-in on numerous gatherings of smaller village collectives and community groups. During this time, I conducted interviews with more than 30 various stakeholders of PNPM.[11] To gain a more holistic view of the program I collected data from a diverse range of participants. From the village level I engaged in informal conversations with a sample of more than 40 farmers and community members. Outside of the village context I visited a number of government offices and conducted interviews at the sub-district, district, province, and national level. Finally, during a short visit to Jakarta, appointments were also made with representatives of the major donor organisations (AusAID, World Bank) and shareholders who "support" and oversee the program for community empowerment.

This paper will draw primarily on data and statistics collected from PNPM facilitators, more than 20 hours of information recorded in semi-structured interviews, as well as from observations made after living for more than 10 days in various villages of Gunungkidul. The data collected through this research in Indonesia was primarily qualitative. This information will be used to measure levels of overall participation as well as participation from various demographics such as women's groups and groups categorised within low socio-economic status or *RTM*.[12]It is important that these insights into women's participation in village meetings are viewed as a small part of a much wider context of customs and traditions as well as feminism and women's movements in Indonesia.

[11] Note: to protect the privacy and confidentiality of these interview subjects, all of the names of PNPM facilitators, local government staff, heads of collectives, villagers and other subjects interviewed have been changed. The names of all villages (except Pertama and Terakhir) and sub-districts remain the same.

[12] *RTM* (rumahtanggamiskin) – translated as "poor households" – this can be seen as the groups who are categorised as from a lower-socio-economic background.

DISCUSSION

From my experience in visiting the January *musyawarah*[13] meetings to discuss village planning, women's participation showed dramatic variation depending on the particular village. At the first meeting I visited, in "Pertama"village, Playen sub-district, I observed 8 women out of a total 56 in attendance; only 14.3%.Yet this was an extreme result which displayed the lowest level of community participation out of the 13 villages in the Playen sub-district. At the other extreme was the village of Plembutan which saw women's participation at 45 out of 62, an impressive 72.6%. This is well above the minimum target of 40%. According to records of attendance kept by sub-district PNPM-Facilitators, the overall participation averaged at around 43.58% attendance signalling that some progress has been made towards raising women's passive participation. Despite the fact that these figures fall marginally short of the wider claim of the World Bank,[14] these results remain encouraging. Nevertheless, such figures only present one side of the picture and do not explain the extent to which this attendance demonstrates a genuinely active form of participation.

From my own observation in cases like that of Pertama village, a sense of "voice" amongst the women present was clearly lacking. The conditions of such meetings were not conducive to active discussion. The seating arrangement was clearly hierarchical.Tables were set-up in a grid which focused attention on the authoritative speakers (predominantly male).In contrast,the majority of the women were subjects to be lectured to, found sitting at the back of the room. Here it could be seen how seating arrangements create a clear power structure. Instead of encouraging active discussion, the meeting was organised as a lecture in which the local government and PNPM-officials controlled the agenda. The supposed target audience of marginal women and lower socio-economic groups did not often actively convey their ideas, defend their proposals, or influencethe ranking or funding of proposals. Indeed, in such settings these marginalised groups did not have the chance or even the agency to contribute to the discussion.

In contrast to the lack of voice at Pertama, were the observations made in many of the following village meetings. In the majority of *musyawarah* I visited in January,there was a much

[13]*Musyawarah** (can be interpreted as a form of consensus based forum; technically a legislative decision making process)
[14]The wider claim* (that the participation of women in PNPM average 45%), refer to p.4.

clearer sense of voice amongst the women present. The tables were often set up into circles where smaller focus groups had been allocated particular topics of village planning. These topics were standard for each village throughout the entire district and included social and cultural programs (crafts, trainingand education), basic infrastructure needs (roads, bridges, water storage facilities etc…); and economic projects (e.g. microfinance and rotating funds). Through this set-up, the meeting encouraged active participation and agency through group discussion in which ideas were formed by community members and shared with the larger group. These results were observed in numerous *musyawarah* in villages such as Grogol, Melikan,Semugih andJepitu, across four separate sub-districts.Such strong active participation observed in these villages demonstrates the extent to which some of these women's communities have managed to break away from the confinement of *state ibuism* and patriarchal traditions.

So how is it that there can be such dramatically varying results in terms of women's participation? How can some villages have such high levels of active participation while other villages display much poorer results in terms of women's civic engagement? What I claim to show through this research is that levels of participation become dependent on a range of local (community-driven) factors as well as a range of external (project-driven) factors. The local factors examined within my field work include cultural and gender structures, physical and geographic obstacles and the role of local government. I also explore the influence of communal solidarity; more accurately captured within the notion of *gotongroyong* – a uniquely Malay/Indonesian form of collective social activity (Ariff&Nambiar 2005). The researcher also acknowledges the importance of external factors such as the role of PNPM facilitators, the many nationwide structures of project driven development within PNPM-Rural, as well as political and economic factors such as the continuing process of decentralisation within the wider context; see (Alm, Robert &Bahl 2001, pp.83-102). However, due to the constraints of this essay,[15]I will not be able to explore these external factors in great detail.

The factors which most influenced levels of passive participation (attendance) included geographic, physical and time-based factors. In villages which cover vast amounts of land it can be difficult to

[15] Constraints* were mainly defined by the word-length of the essay.

encourage the most distant households to make the long distance journey. This is especially true during the harvest season. In the context of a primarily agricultural society, many farmers may prioritise working their fields and managing their crops over attending village meetings (Mr.Abdul 2012 pers. Comm., 16 January).[16] In terms of time related factors it is important that meetings are set at an appropriate time. If the meetings are scheduled for market days, holy *adat* days or at times when housework and other tasks must be completed, high women's participation is less likely to occur (World Bank 2003).

The support of local government and village leaders also becomes important in the socialisation of the program to the community. In cases like Logandengthe village governments focused, not only towards facilitating these meetings but also,towards raising women's participation and enforcing the minimum of 40% women's attendance (Mr.Surjono 2012 pers. Comm., 17 January).[17]Logandeng happened to be the only village in the entire district with a woman elected as village head. Ms.Amini (2012 pers. Comm., 16 January), explained her emphasis on socialization towards women's groups as a means of raising the aspirations of these women.[18] With 87.2%, Logandeng had the highest attendance of women recorded at the *Musrenbangdes*[19] (village meeting) for socialisation of the program. This meeting was important in introducing the stakeholders to PNPM and informing them about how they can be involved in the program. The alternative outcome can be seen in cases like Pertama village where this focus towards women communities was absent. Such examples demonstrate a clear correlation between incomplete socialisation and poor results of women's attendance in subsequent meetings. In this case only 17 women attended the socialisation meeting (27.87%).This may have resulted in the insufficient circulation of information throughout women's circles and groups.Such results may occur in cases where village government and elites are ill-disposed to the program (Mr. Akbar 2012 pers. Comm., 25 January).[20]This ambivalence may arise from the costs of organising these meetings and the resulting burdens on the local government budget.

[16] Interview with PNPM Sub-District Facilitator of Paliyan, (16/1/2012).
[17] Interview with PNPM Sub-District Facilitator of Paliyan, (16/1/2012).
[18]Interview with Logandengvillage Head, Playen, (16/1/2012).
[19]*Musrenbangdes* (short version of) *Musyawarahdesa* – village consensus building forum.
[20] Interview with Rongkop sub-district PNPM Facilitator (25/1/2012), *Musrenbangdes*Melikan.

Culture and gender structures within Javanese tradition often restrict the levels of women's (passive and active) participation at village meetings. In many cases invitations address the heads of households who are generally defined as the husband. A female head of household is often not acknowledged (World Bank 2003). The male-dominated social structure makes the process of raising women's active participation difficult for PNPM-facilitators such as Ms.Ezka (2012 pers. Comm., 13 January) who believesthat many women are still trapped within the traditional mould of the *iburumahtangga*(housewife).[21] As a result, many of them lack confidence and do not feel that they have adequate"voice" with which to speak out in these meetings.These conditions are only reinforced by out-dated representations of women as traditional, inert, backward looking, in contrast to the images of men as the progressive agent of development (McClintock 1993, pp.61-64). Indeed, progress is often constrained by "an old assumption that women do not have potency…" states, Ms.Amini (2012 pers. Comm., 16 January).[22]

Villages which displayed the highest levels of active women's participation often possessed 3 key elements. According to Mr Abdul (2012 pers. Comm., 16 January)[23] active participation would more often result in women's groups if they "felt there was a benefit in doing so";if there was a sense of mutual cooperation"*gotongroyong"*; or alternatively "if there was a competitive element" within participation at village meetings. A belief that their voices would be heard and that they could influence and benefit from actively participating in the meeting was crucial in encouraging women's agency. A common theme here was the idea of *gotongroyong.* For the purposes of this paper the term may be understood as "mutual cooperation" but also as the broader idea of cooperative social action in various communal activities (Bowen JR 1986). *Gotongroyong* was linked to higher levels of attendance and activism in women's communities in more than 10 separateinterviews with various people involved in PNPM. The third element here was competitiveness, which acted to direct the village communities towards common goals and provide incentives. Tools such as ranking systemswhich rate villages on meeting women's participation requirements were examples of how competitiveness was used as aninstrumentto create "team spirit". This was especially useful in raising

[21]Interview with Playen Sub-District PNPM Facilitator (13/1/2012), Playen office.
[22]Interview with Logandengvillage Head, Playen, (16/1/2012).
[23]Interview with PNPM Sub-District Facilitator of Paliyan, (16/1/2012), BalaiDesaGrogol.

levels of active participation. In some villages this sense of communal solidarity was reinforced through the use of songs like *desaku*" my village" which meeting participants would sing to express their love and patriotism for their village (PNPM 2011). Active participation within women's groups themselves such as rotating fund groups also join *lomba* or "competitions" as an incentive. It was surprising to see how powerful the element of competition could be. Even Ms. Ainun (2012 pers. Comm., 13 January),[24] the head of a small women's rotating fund group (SPP), believed that progress meant "not being left behind by the other villages." Villages which possessed these elements of incentives, competition, and belief in communal solidarity or *gotong-royong* were often linked to higher levels of passive participation and also active participation(Mr. Abdul 2012 pers. Comm., 16 January).[25]

While many of the PNPM village meetings I visited in this period did encourage much higher levels passive and active participation amongst women, the program still struggled to reach those women and lower-socio economic groups who were most marginalised. Despite the World Bank's claim that nearly 60% of those who attend these meetings are from the poorer segments of society, the records show that attendance of *RTM*within the two main sub-districts of this study, Playen and Rongkop, was much lower. In these cases it was found that attendance of *RTM* at village meetings averaged around 30%.From my interviews with people outside of the village-elite circles around Rongkop and Girisubo and other sub-districts, I found that there were certain demographics which were much less likely to be included in PNPM village meetings and programs. These groups included the elderly, landless, *RTM*and women's demographics. I observed that many of the women and men who were either elderly or from poorer classes had either never heard of PNPM; or had heard of it, but did not feel included. Out of 22 women (primarily farmers) I spoke with in the village, 14 of them did not know about the program or how they could benefit. Six of these women had heard of the program but three of them were scared of accumulating debt by joining the *SPP* rotating fund groups. The only woman who did know and felt involved with the program was much younger between 20-30 years old and from a middle-class rather than farming household. Within this particular sample, younger, middle-

[24] Interview with member of women's collective PKK (13/1/2012), Playen office.
[25]Interview with PNPM Sub-District Facilitator of Paliyan, (16/1/2012), BalaiDesaGrogol.

class, educated women were most likely to be invited and involved in the program. In contrast, women who were least likely to know about the program were elderly, landless, or from a lower socio-economic group that had not gained access to education. As a result, within this case PNPM provided political space, more for the upwardly mobile women than for those women from the poorer, landless, disabled, elderly and farming groups. This notion of PNPM being pro-middle class rather than pro-poor is reinforced through numerous documentation of elite-capture within the program; see GAPRI (2011), Yulianto(2011) and Febriany et al. (2011,).

There were difficultiesin raising the voice and agency of members of the lower socio-economic *RTM* groups in the village meetings I visited. During my final visit to a village meeting in Terakhir, I found the highest attendance of *RTM* (50%) compared to all the previous meetings. However, from my observation, it was mainly the middle-class women who were sitting in the focus groups, discussing and planning their village's development programs. While this was going on, there was a large group of men and some women who were sitting idly at the very back of the meeting. I spoke with these large groups. Most of them were farmers from the *RTM*who did not really understand the content of the meeting but had merely joined for "*gotongroyong*". Many did not know of PNPM but had heard many years ago of *PPK*. This lack of understanding is indicative not only of incomplete socialisation of the program but also of confusion resulting from the change in name from *PPK* to PNPM. The apparent confusion demonstrates how name changing and repackaging the rhetoric of the program has had adverse effects on the realityof development at the stage of socialisation.Returning to the idea of buzzwords, through changing the name of *PPK* to PNPM as a display of normative power, the World Bank may have done more to confuse and alienate the members of the poor community rather than empowering them. This meeting had brought 27 members of the *RTM* (an impressive 50%) to attendance.However, it was clear that in this particular case,*RTM* inclusion was for the most part, merely a form of tokenisticpassive participation.

The difficulty which PNPM faces in engaging with those communities most marginalized canalso be partly attributed to the fact that the program rests upon an assumption that communities are homogenous.In reality, communities are soidiosyncratic and diverse that any attempt to standardize

them will inevitably result in shortfall (Elias 2005). Hierarchies within women's groups, based on class, socio-economic status and age are implicit in community life. From my observation in meetings like Terakhir, PNPMoften treats women's participation as a form of tokenism and symbolic representation.Overrepresentation of village elites and women who are already upwardly mobile is a result of the program trying to gain the numbers rather than engaging with the women's groups who are most in need. As a result, PNPM struggled to reach the poorest of the poor, the elderly and the most marginalised communities. There were no mechanisms to involve the disabled or the elderly women's groups in these programs. These are of course areas which should be acknowledged but would require further research and a reorientation of the goals of the program.

Another obstacle which limits the effectiveness of community driven development in the case of PNPM, is the fact that the program is still constrained by external (project driven factors). These include the time limits set by the central government based around the financial year, the standardization of village structures throughout Indonesia and the mainstreaming of methods and procedures used in delivering the program (Mr.Syukri 2012 pers. Comm., 24 January).[26] This kind of mainstreaming is based upon the precarious assumption that the same standardized procedures will be effective in parts of Indonesia which are culturally, linguistically and socially diverse.

Through my research into women's participation in local village meetings organised by the National Program for Community Empowerment in Indonesia, I foundthe process of women's empowermentto be more complex and nuanced than originally expected. Firstly the observation of strong women's groups and collectives both within and outside of PNPM revealed the weakness of the notion of women as a group which was eternally marginalised to the domestic sphere. Indeed, even before the New Order period, women within rural Java played strong roles in both farming and markets. With the dismantling of "*state ibuism*", it could only be expected that the growth of women's influence would spill-over into the context of resource allocation and decision making processes at village meetings. Through exploring the factors that influenced women's participation it was found that passive participation andattendance was influenced by physical and social factors such as geography and

[26]Interview with researcher from SMERU Research Institute, (24/1/2012), Jakarta.

socialisation.Conversely,levels of active participation or “voice”were more subject to culturalgender structures, and social-culturalconditions of competitiveness and *gotongroyong*. Within this particular case study, the mechanisms of PNPM were more effective in raising attendance of women’s groups, than in raising the attendance and active participation of the *RTM*.

CONCLUSION

PNPM contributes to the larger movement towardswomen's empowerment which has been a wider ongoing process. Examples such as the feminist movements and the legislative changes made throughpolicies like *Affirmative Action*are symptomatic of a much wider movement towards women's empowerment than can be seen within the scope of the standardised mechanisms of PNPM. Instead of acting as an initiator of empowerment, PNPM-Mandiri Rural provides political space for these women within the forum of *SPP* and *MKP*. In this sense PNPM is most effective in raising participation of women (especially those who have already gained education or possess voice) in the processes of planning, implementation and management of village of projects. However, the program is weakest when it comes to instilling agency within, and empowering, thosewomen's groups who are most marginalised. As a result, the program will still need to work hard in order to engage with poorer, elderly or landless groups who have not had access to education and are consequently perceived as not possessing the capacity to learn. The results of this study raise pertinent questions about the community driven development paradigm.Questions such as what is meant by empowerment? Who is being empowered? How participative are these programs? And who is really participating? All of these questions are complex and indeterminate.Yet what they present in greater clarity is a sobering reminder; a reminder that the language of the global development discourse or "*developmentspeak*" should be analysed critically.

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