

The Sunset of Gotong Royong in Village of Olak Alen

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Abstract: Social capital is commonly found in villages of Indonesia in the form of *gotong-royong*. Nowadays, modernization has potentially reduced the existence of *gotong-royong*. This research aims to explore the existing situation of *gotong-royong* in Village of Olak Alen and investigate causing factors. This research employed qualitative research. The findings showed that social capital that reflected in the tradition of *gotong-royong* in the Village of Olak Alen is currently wiped out from the community.

JEL Classification: P25, O18, O15

1 INTRODUCTION

Social capital has played important role in people's activities in Indonesia (Iskandar, 2016). People activities will be led by social capital which was commonly known as *gotong-royong* inherited from their ancestors. Several studies showed that activities that led by social capital will play role in gain higher welfare, for example Dharmawan (2007); Bowen (1986). Dharmawan (2007) found that farmers community that intensively interacted with nature create some collective-based-associational-ties which functioned as a safety net to farmers' livelihood. Indigenous livelihood institution, which represented in associational-ties like patron-client, is the most important part of social security net in villages. That net exists for centuries to provide economic security of households collectively.

One measurement for economic security is through wealth accumulation. Success households, in the economic term, will able to accumulate wealth. Besides higher income earned, households must able to accumulating assets (whether liquid, for example bullion and jewelry or non-liquid assets, for example house and land area). Unfortunately, the capital accumulation tends to be weakened by losing of social capital ties. Recent studies show that losing social capital ties in villages may lowering people welfare, for example Wetterberg (2004); Dharmawan (2007); Mavridis (2015).

Wetterberg (2004) found one factor that causes the losing in social capital ties is less of state assistance. Dharmawan (2007) also found that agricultural transformation may result in the diminishing role of social system and ecology in villages. Mavridis (2015) found that Indonesian ethnic diversity increases tolerance but may lower social capital outcomes, such as trust, perceived safety, participation in community activities, and voting in elections. In the Village of Olak Alen, most of its population work in the agriculture sector. This economic activity is inherited from their ancestors, together with various social capital. Nowadays, the situation is changed. Because of modernization and previous economic crises potentially change or even delete social capital in that village. The change or diminish of social capital potentially bring numerous consequences, both for the economic and social condition. Thus, it is important to reveals how the inexistence of social capital in one village may change population living condition. This research is aimed to investigate the existence of social capital in Village of Olak Alen, Indonesia and to find how changes in social capital will affect population welfare.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Bowen (1986) constructed social interaction in Indonesia into *koperasi* (cooperatives; constitutionally the basis of the economy), *musyawarah* (consensus; technically the basis for legislative decision making); and, underlying all the others, *gotong royong* (mutual assistance). Bowen (1986) stated that *gotong royong* as a mutual and reciprocal assistance, as in the traditional Javanese village where labor is accomplished through reciprocal exchange, and villagers are motivated by a general ethos of selflessness and concern for the common good.

Bowen (1986) stated that even though the term *gotong royong* is generally perceived by Indonesians to be a long-standing Javanese expression (and this perception is part of its status as a bearer of tradition), it is more likely an Indonesian construction of relatively recent vintage. The root of the expression is probably the Javanese verb *ngotong* (cognate to the Sundanese *ngagotong*), meaning "several people carrying something together," plus the pleasantly rhyming *royong*. Although some newer Javanese dictionaries include *royong* as a separate lexical item with the same meaning as *gotong* he has been unable to find any Javanese who recognized the word *royong* by itself.

The nature of reciprocity and collective labor in *gotong royong* tradition can be separated into three forms (Bowen, 1986): labor mobilized as a direct exchange, generalized reciprocal assistance, and labor mobilized on the basis of political status. Firstly, labor exchange, either between individuals or involving rotating work parties, involves a calculation of the amount of work to be accomplished by each participant. Such work arrangements are particularly common for major agricultural tasks, notably hoeing, plowing, planting, and harvesting.

Secondly, generalized reciprocity. The second type of mutual assistance is based on an idea of generalized reciprocity. The villager, by virtue of his or her status as a member of a community, is obliged to help out in events such as the raising of the roof of a house, the marriage of a child, or the death of a relative. Generalized reciprocity involves both a general obligation and the idea of an eventual return. The result is that within a particular circle of kin or neighbors one feels a general obligation to help, but one also remembers how much the needy person helped in the past.

Thirdly, the mutual assistance that is nationally called *gotong royong* consists of labor that is mobilized on the basis of political status or subordination. Such labor appears as "assistance" when it is contributed, for example, toward the repair of an irrigation system, but it begins to resemble corvee when it is commandeered by a local official for the construction of a district road.

Rural welfare can be influenced by accessibility (Soseco, 2016). He found that better accessibility leads to better income earned by villagers. Income inequality also plays role in affecting rural welfare (Soseco, et al., 2017). They found that rural welfare, indicated from their ability to obtain a house, is influenced by the existence of income inequality. Moreover, rural welfare can be affected by savings accumulation (Singh, 2011). Savings are the unconsummated earning of individual consumption and capital formation including investment (Singh, 2011). National savings constitutes the sum of net changes in the net worth of all economic units in an economy. With many financial sources and given assets, in addition their own income, new families should be easier to accumulate wealth. However, this does not exist in our study area. Most of the new families still live in persistent level.

Singh (2011) stated that majority of people living in rural and semi-urban parts of India lack knowledge of the financial markets and fail to understand them. Gold, either in primary or in jewelry form, still remain the second most preferred option among the Indian public after deposits in the banks. Rural households saved their income in both monetized as well as non-monetized forms. Moreover, some of the monetized savings are held in financial assets of the informal rural financial market can be considered as potentially mobilizable by the financial agencies.

In rural areas, savings and investment are influenced by occupation, expenditure, assets, and saving. While the number of dependents, age composition, nature of work, and education level did not have a significant effect on saving (Odoemenem, 2013). Some important factors that influencing investment pattern based on Kalidoss and Jenmarakkini (2012) are monthly income, monthly expenditure, family size, monthly savings, the reason of savings, the source of savings, and source of information.

3 METHOD

This study applied qualitative research. Three informants are involved in this research. All of them are male, working in the agriculture sector, and have a relatively same socio-economic status. Also, we employ supporting data from related institutions such as the Indonesian Statistics Bureau and Local Government and local government. The study area is in the village of Olak Alen, Regency of Blitar, Province of Jawa Timur, Indonesia. this village is situated on main roads connecting two big cities in Jawa Timur, Malang and Blitar. This village is not far from two tourism objects (Karangkates Dam and Lahor Dam). Those spots are originally coming from a hydroelectric power plant which later developed as tourism objects.

We asked three villagers to participate in our research. All of our respondents are male, with the age between 30-40 years old. All of them are have senior high school (year 16-18) as their highest educational attainment. In their families, both of parents are workers. Husband work in farmland, while their wives help them in farmland.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our focus area is based on rural typology from Lowe and Ward (2009). Their simplified typology can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Rural Area Types Generated by the Cluster Analysis

No	Type	Description
1.	Dynamic commuter areas	Socially and economically dynamic and affluent
2.	Settled commuter areas	Share characteristics with the first type, but tend to be less vibrant, more settled and more provincial, often associated with other city regions, commuter hinterlands of regional hubs,
3.	Dynamic rural areas	Have a high density of professional and knowledge workers, sometimes being associated with universities or other research centers.
4.	Deep rural areas	The countryside that still dependent on farming but with increasingly important tourism element and less reliance on commuting. Sparsely

	populated communities.	farming
5.	Retirement retreat areas	Comprise popular retirement destinations and have ageing populations.
6.	Peripheral amenity areas	Located in economically marginal zones, particularly on the coast, that may have suffered structural economic decline and are now propped up by tourism or retirement-related services.
7.	Transient rural areas	Situated close to struggling urban centres, associated with commuting, but also associated with low incomes. Near to declining market towns, former mining areas, etc.

Source: Lowe and Ward (2009); Gallent and Robinson (2012)

Based on table 1, Village of Olak-Alen is considered as 'deep rural areas'. Lowe and Ward (2009) explained deep rural areas below:

Deep rural areas would resonate most closely with popular perceptions of the 'traditional' countryside. Conventional livestock farming is more prominent, together with rural tourism. Population density is way below the rural mean, creating a pervading sense of tranquility. In other respects, though, Deep Rural areas seem to lack sufficient symbolic resources to attract in those socio-economic classes that are underpinning the vibrancy of the 'commuter' categories. Population change is only at the rural average, there being neither significant in-migration nor much commuting. Physical remoteness and poor infrastructure (for example, of information and communication technology networks or motorways) explain some of the situations.

In Olak Alen, most of its population work in the agriculture sector. Majority of them plant paddy and corn, These commodities are different in the suitable season to be planted. In rainy seasons, farmers plant paddy, while in dry seasons they plant corn. Besides, they also have cattle in their yard. Commonly, they have cows, chickens, or ducks. This activity is needed to support households' finance. Our respondents said that majority of farmers in the Village of Olak Alen are depended on their harvest. They get a fluctuactive earning. By depend on crop, they get a periodical earning, usually 3 or 4 months. Thus, to overcome the financial problem, most farmers has cattle in their backyards. Also, while waiting for harvesting period, some of them work in

non-agricultural sectors such as drivers, construction workers, or pedicab drivers.

In the past, the atmosphere in the Village of Olak Alen is full of local wisdom *gotong-royong* (working together to solve one problem). This action does not only exist in social aspect but also in economic aspect. In social aspect, *gotong-royong* is intended to solve one or more social problems. For example, lack of infrastructure (e.g. poor road condition or irrigation system) is solved by working together to overcome the problem. The participants work with no payment. Furthermore, some families voluntarily provide food and drinks for them. In the economic sector, *gotong-royong* is conducted to overcome some economic problems. People who need additional labor usually ask their neighborhood to help them, usually with no or little gratification. To pay the labor cost, the employee also conducts reciprocal action in other farmlands.

In our field visit in the Village of Olak Alen, the tradition of *gotong-royong* is partially swiped out from villagers' tradition. *Gotong royong* still exist only to overcome social problems, whereas in to solve economic problems, people tend to use the capitalist method, i.e. by pay the workers. The inexistence of *gotong-royong* to overcome economic problems in Village of Olak Alen is started from 1997-1998, where the economic crisis peaked in Indonesia. This situation worsened people welfare. Thus, they tend to avoid work voluntarily but work by salary. On the other hand, the crisis boost created additional unemployment. They, who are unemployed, would work any jobs with any level of salary. This moment created the tradition of paid-workers in all economic aspects. *Gotong royong* still exist in solving social problems. After a period of 1997-1998, the cultural ties are weakened by the financial crisis. It allowed people to move to another village. Also, it drove to higher mobilization among people. Thus, villagers seemed to give a big effort to preserve their ancient tradition through *gotong-royong* in solving social problems.

There are several causes of diminishing spirit of *gotong-royong* in Village of Olak Alen. First, people tend to place money as their first priority. This mindset drives people to find other financial sources. For example, people who feel that their income is not sufficient to pay their needs will find side jobs or work in other cities. Their insufficient income also leads to a poor condition where almost all aspects in life are measured in money.

Second, people will feel that their neighborhood as competitors, not a partner. This situation drives to unacceptable ways conducted by some farmers to

increase their production. In the Village of Olak Alen, there is a *kelompok tani* (a group of farmers) who accommodates them in agriculture issues. This *kelompok tani* is aimed to provide inexpensive seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Also, *kelompok tani* is used to introduce better farming methods and cures. Insufficient income drive to some farmers cheats by approaching the leaders of *kelompok tani* to gain privilege. As a result, only they who have an exclusive connection to *kelompok tani* can access for inexpensive seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Other farmers will lose the opportunity to gain those inexpensive items.

Third, the income inequality in the Village of Olak Alen created additional pressure on poorest people. Rich families have bigger opportunity to enhance their living standard through many channels, e.g. gain wider access to the market, bigger capital to operate their farmlands, and apply new farming techniques. On the other hands, poorer families tend to stuck in their living condition. To solve their financial problems, some families sell their farmland to richer families. The peasant lives in poor condition and will to work at any wage level.

Fourth, there are differences in investment pattern among a different group of farmers. Richer families will have the capacity to invest in some investment instruments. Majority of them buy jewelry and land area as their investment tools. Jewelry is easily bought and sold, even in their nearest jewelry stores in their village. Besides, land area is usually sold at a low price by poorer families to fulfill their needs. They, especially who are trapped in debt, sell their farmland at a low price to get fresh money. In contrary, poorer families will have no adequate investment. Their low income is only sufficient to pay their daily needs.

Fifth, an agricultural transformation that provides benefit only for a few people. Our respondents stated that their living condition is lower than before the 1997/1998 crisis. They argued that it is difficult to find high income nowadays. They have to struggle with their relatively constant earnings from their farmland. Otherwise, they must find other jobs or move to other cities. In the previous period, people feel safe and easy to gain income. Everything is considered guaranteed by the government. Obtaining money has not a big concern for them. Thus, people enjoy sharing their time and force for their community, which was called *gotong-royong*. In that era, *gotong-royong* was conducted in almost all aspects of community: social, economic, religious, etc. As a result, nowadays, people who do not enjoy

the progress of modernization will distract themselves from the social system.

The sunset of local wisdom, reflected in *gotong-royong*, is also described by Dharmawan (2007). He found that agricultural reformation in Java Island destructed existing social system and ecology in villages. Not only that, agricultural transformation gave some implications: (1) poor inequality of agricultural resources and (2) the diminishing of traditional income sources and at the same time there were new non-agricultural income sources, which unfortunately, those new income sources could not guarantee an increase of welfare of poor people. In the end, Dharmawan (2007) stated that the agricultural transformation could end in (1) higher degree of livelihood insecurity and (2) the inability for institutional tools to provide sufficient income for the population.

In Olak Alen, there is a shift of livelihood sources from agriculture to non-agriculture sectors. This situation is similar to Bogor Stream that initiated by Sajogjo (Dharmawan, 2007). This stream is distinctively different from Western Stream (commonly from experts from Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK) e.g. Chambers and Conway, de Haan, Scoones, Bebbington and Batterbury, and Ellis. The idea of Bogor Stream emphasizes on the assumption of the work of two economic sectors, which reflected in figure 1.

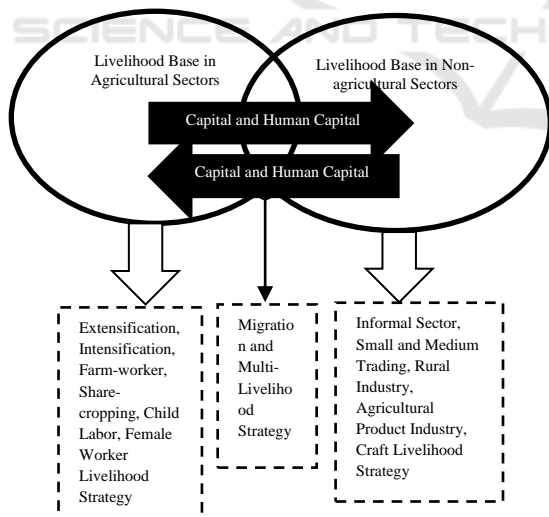


Figure 1: Rural Capital and Human Capital Mobilization in Two Livelihood Bases based on Bogor Stream. Source: Dharmawan (2007)

In figure 1, income sources in rural areas are from agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Then the livelihood strategy has developed the work of

two economic sectors (agricultural and non-agricultural) and also influenced by local socio-cultural pattern or tradition. There are three elements which significantly influence the pattern of livelihood strategy in rural areas: (1) Social infrastructure, which includes institution and social norm settings, (2) Social structure, which includes social layers, agricultural structure, demographic structure, local ecosystem exploitation pattern, local knowledge and (3) Social supra-structure, which include ideology, moral-ethics economic, and value system.

The existence of two livelihood bases in the village (agricultural and non-agricultural sectors) create community involvement into those two sectors. This can be seen from activities conducted by each social class in the village. Each people can use hard capital (land, finance, and physical tools) and also soft capital (intelligence, skill) to create some livelihood strategies. The combination of hard capital and soft capital is majorly influenced by the previous three socio-culture elements that exist in the village.

Dharmawan (2007) found that every social relationship among the population in a village not only have a neutral connotation but also create an asymmetrical relationship (and also power). This relationship always benefits one party only. Most small farmers are trapped in this relationship. Majorly, they trapped because of livelihood net that “push” them and at the same time allow them to “breathe” especially in the crisis period. This situation makes a condition where *pengijon* and *rentenir* (loan-shark) freely operates in a village. Even though farmers realize that they have to pay very high-interest rate from loan received from *rentenir* and *pengijon* give the low price of their harvest but they feel that costs rose from *pengijon* and *rentenir* cannot substitute “safe feeling” for farmers.

The agricultural transformation is responded differently by the social system in a village. They who cannot adapt to structural change will force the community to live in poor condition, in financial and economic aspects. This situation provides very limited income sources for them. Sometimes, that sources cannot provide adequate income for them. Thus, farmers will retract themselves from an existing social system in a village. In reality, this can be seen from the fade of *gotong-royong*.

Many agenda can be scheduled to provide sustainable social system, including *gotong-royong* (Dharmawan, 2007): (1) there is an urgency to provide livelihood system and livelihood-oriented

community development, (2) it is important to create rural social-safety net, and (3) it is important to stipulate rural livelihood access and rights.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Social capital, that reflected in the tradition of *gotong-royong* in the Village of Olak Alen is currently wiped out from the community. *Gotong royong* is only implemented in solving many social problems, not in economic ones. Villagers conduct various economic activities through wage-earnings practices. This fade of *gotong-royong* is caused by several factors: Firstly, people tend to put money as their first priority. Secondly, the shift of people's role from partners to competitors. Thirdly, income inequality that multiplies the negative effects. Fourthly, differences in investment pattern among different groups of farmers. Fifthly, an agricultural transformation that benefits only a few people. This situation creates many people who cannot adapt to changes will be kicked out from the community. They will withdraw themselves from the social system. Many agenda can be scheduled to provide sustainable social system, including *gotong-royong* (Dharmawan, 2007): (1) there is an urgency to provide livelihood system and livelihood-oriented community development, (2) it is important to create rural social-safety net, and (3) it is important to stipulate rural livelihood access and rights.

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