

The Dynamic of Actors' Relation to the Susceptible Condition of the Village Participatory Democracy

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Keyword:

Accountability;
Autocracy;
Democracy;
Village.

Abstract: This article deals with the implementation dynamics of the Village Law in a particular context that reflects the practice of developing participatory democracy. The effective administration of village development necessitates the cultivation of a collective ethos to foster a sense of kinship and cooperation and to promote the integration of social justice principles. In essence, effective governance necessitates accountability and participation, whereby the village government is responsible for transparently reporting and justifying all development operations or programs to residents under regulations outlined in the Village Law. Furthermore, residents should be actively engaged and involved in all phases of the development process. This study employed a descriptive approach and purposive sample technique to select key informants from government officials and citizens of Soriutu Village, located in the Manggelewa District of Dompu Regency, inside the West Nusa Tenggara Province. This essay examined the dynamics of actors' relationships in the management of development activities, specifically focusing on the leadership style of the village head from 2010 to 2016. The autocratic leadership style in Soriutu Village hinders the inclusion of inhabitants in all stages of village development governance, impeding the achievement of participatory democracy. This study's findings could enhance the theoretical understanding of leadership styles, community participation, transparency, informal participation preferences, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy critiques, and optimal village development management models.

Kata Kunci:

Akuntabilitas;
Otokrasi;
Demokrasi;
Desa.

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas dinamika implementasi Undang-Undang Desa dalam konteks tertentu yang mencerminkan praktek pengembangan demokrasi partisipatif. Administrasi pembangunan desa yang efektif memerlukan pembentukan etos kolektif untuk memupuk rasa kekeluargaan dan kerjasama serta mempromosikan integrasi prinsip-prinsip keadilan sosial di dalamnya. Tata kelola tersebut juga membutuhkan akuntabilitas dan partisipasi, di mana pemerintah desa bertanggung jawab untuk melaporkan dan menjelaskan semua kegiatan pembangunan secara transparan kepada warga sesuai ketentuan Undang-Undang Desa. Selain itu, warga harus terlibat aktif dan dilibatkan dalam semua tahap proses pembangunan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif dan teknik purposive sampling untuk memilih informan kunci dari pejabat pemerintah dan warga Desa Soriutu, Kecamatan Manggelewa, Kabupaten Dompu, Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat. Esai ini meneliti dinamika hubungan aktor dalam pengelolaan kegiatan pembangunan, terutama berfokus pada gaya kepemimpinan kepala desa dari tahun 2010 hingga 2016. Gaya kepemimpinan otokratis cenderung menghambat keterlibatan warga dalam semua tahap tata kelola pembangunan desa, sehingga menghalangi pencapaian demokrasi partisipatif. Temuan penelitian ini dapat meningkatkan pemahaman teoretis tentang gaya kepemimpinan, partisipasi masyarakat, transparansi, preferensi partisipasi informal, demokrasi partisipatif, kritik demokrasi deliberatif, dan model manajemen pembangunan desa yang optimal.

INTRODUCTION

The enactment of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages is a significant milestone in the governance of development in Indonesia. This legislation offers significant prospects and adaptability for the

critical stakeholders of the village to enhance the well-being of the people. After being the target of development strategies for many years, villages now have more power to create policies and implement their development. As a result, they are now subjects that actively contribute to growth. The Village Law has created enormous opportunities for developing new models of village governance, designing it as a venue for developing democratic local capacity through civic engagement scenarios. The New Order legacy, which still profoundly ingrains the weak organizational and institutional capabilities of civil society in village life to this day (Tyson, 2012; van Klinken, 2018), contrasts with the Village Law's aim to create opportunities for the development of new models of village governance. Village development deals with improving public welfare and poverty reduction by fulfilling basic needs, developing village facilities, revitalizing the local economic potential, and utilizing natural resources sustainably. The village government has the power to freely govern within this framework, aiming to raise the standard of living for the residents. The village government must manage its varied resources, including the village's assets and finances, by using its institutional skills.

Giving the village government extensive authority to build settlements according to origin rights ownership and local administration at the village level bolsters the goal of achieving village autonomy. Within this context, the village government must implement development phases, including planning, budgeting, implementing, reporting, monitoring, and supervision. As previously mentioned, one concrete way to express the authority to control and oversee different village-scale local authorities is through autonomously planning, budgeting, implementing, reporting, monitoring, and supervising village development activities. Under the Village Law, to establish the mainstreaming of social justice, the village development governance must prioritize the spirit of kinship, togetherness, and cooperation. Put another way, this kind of governance needs to be inclusive and accountable, meaning that the village administration needs to report to the inhabitants on any programmes or activities related to village development while adhering to legal requirements and involving all societal levels during the development process. The cornerstones of participatory democracy are accountability and citizen involvement, which are the main elements the village administration needs to incorporate into their daily operations.

After the *reformation* era, an oasis that offered both chances and problems for the re-democratization of villages was the issuing of the Village Law. This new regulation provides a route for revolutionary change for villages. It states that meetings on village planning and budgeting must include the community to be involved in these processes. Participation and initiation by citizens, which combine the roles of figures, awareness of fundamental rights, and social capital, become essential driving factors for village democracy (Antlöv et al., 2010; Bebbington et al., 2006). For rural communities with a more communal character where collective access to local natural resources is a life-and-death gamble, democracy must emphasize the joint participation of citizens (Akbar et al., 2020; Widianingsih & Morrell, 2007). The Village Deliberation (*Musyawarah Desa/Musdes*) makes decisions based on consensus and allows for citizen engagement. It reflects what is known as the "gateway to democracy development," which is a scenario in which political communication is more open and has an egalitarian pattern so that communication is accessible from the absolute domination of anyone (Hidayat & Sauki, 2023; Taufiq & Hidayat, 2022). The Village Consultative Body (*Badan Permusyawaratan Desa/BPD*) holds this forum at least once a year for all villagers to discuss strategic governance matters (Antlöv, 2003; Antlöv et al., 2016).

Barber (1984) claimed that the purpose of introducing participatory democracy is to build a strong democracy based on the interactions between all parties impacted by a public decision. It is a process whereby citizens are directly involved in managing the administration's affairs to get the maximum good results (Hidayat, 2019). To achieve a more inclusive government, participatory democracy requires greater public involvement in the decision-making process (Datta, 2019). It will encourage the citizens' proactive roles and prioritize opinion formation about all political issues and daily affairs. Participatory democracy increases the legitimacy of local authorities in making decisions by enabling citizens to distribute resources to the most vulnerable members of society (Malik & Nayak, 2021).

Current circumstances indicate that several issues and negative sentiments have emerged following the Village Law's seven-year implementation. Most villages have been unable to interpret the regulations regarding the importance of building participatory democracy. At the same time, seize the opportunities provided in the framework of encouraging the growth and development of citizen initiatives and participation in managing village development (Mariana et al., 2017). In line with that, one of the severe problems faced by the village is the narrowing of community access to get involved and influence the strategic decision-making process concerning the future of the village.

The research locus was Soriutu Village, located in Manggelewa District, Dompu Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, addressing the general complaint about the detrimental practices of accountability, transparency, and participation. This research helps identify these practices' existence and dynamics in a specific context. The primary focus of the research is on how the Village Law is implemented concerning the style, demeanour, and actions of the village head, who holds the highest authority. Specifically, the research aims to determine whether the Village Law's mandate for managing village development promotes or impedes the goal of fostering participatory democracy based on social justice.

This study centres on inquiring about the dynamics of village development management in the Soriutu Village of Manggelewa District, Dompu Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, within the context of the authoritarian leadership style of the village head. It also assesses the degree to which the Village Law facilitates participatory democracy and promotes social justice in the administration of village development. The authors then identify several obstacles to community access in the decision-making process. The research contributes to the body of knowledge regarding inadequate leadership styles within the specific context of Indonesian villages, building upon prior studies by examining additional village settings.

As has been previously done by several parties interested in village issues, this research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding bad leadership styles based on Indonesian village contexts. Mariana et al. (2017), for example, examined aspects of leadership, the effectiveness of representative institutions, and citizen initiatives in ten villages on the island of Java, including Ringinrejo Village, Wates District, Blitar Regency, East Java Province, which have a conservative-bureaucratic leadership style. Furthermore, in Bajo Village, Soromandi District, Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Hidayat et al. (2019) investigate the several "steep roads" of institutionalizing negotiable governance in development management.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is based on the findings of research conducted for two months (September–October 2022) in Soriutu Village. This village has been established 56 years since 1965 and has been led by seven village heads: 1965–1974, 1974–1991, 1991–1999, 1999–2007, 2007–2010, 2010–2016, and 2017–2023. To narrow the scope and area of interest, our study will explore the dynamics of implementing the Village Law against the backdrop of the 2010–2016 village head's leadership style, which some informants claimed to be authoritarian. The data were analyzed through qualitative, thematic, and descriptive techniques. This study aims to understand the impact of the village head's leadership style on social justice and participatory democracy in village development.

The qualitative method with a descriptive approach was applied to this research. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as an investigation into a range of individual and community settings to uncover various issues and seek answers to many questions. The descriptive approach is a method of problem-solving that describes current events or conditions of the research topics (people, institutions, society, etc.) based on the facts as they seem to be (Mohajan, 2018; Mulyawan et al., 2024). Three primary methods were used to collect rich and relevant data: document analysis, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation. Each of these methods plays an essential role in capturing the complexity of interactions and leadership that exist at the village level.

The first stage in data acquisition was document analysis. The authors began by reviewing various documents directly related to village policies and regulations, including the Village Law, the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (*RPJMDesa*), and annual accountability reports. Through this document analysis, the authors were able to gain a deeper understanding of the prevailing policy framework and the formal procedures that should be followed in managing village development. The analysis provides a perspective on how these policies are structurally and formally organized and opens up insights into the provisions or principles that should ideally be implemented in village governance.

After understanding the formal context through documents, the authors continued data collection through in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted with several key informants who were selected purposively or based on certain criteria relevant to the research. The informants included village government leaders and villagers who were considered to have in-depth experience and understanding of village management and leadership dynamics. The interviews focused on the personal experiences and views of the informants on policy implementation, the leadership style of the village head, and the challenges faced in achieving participatory democracy. Each interview was recorded with the informants' consent to ensure the data obtained was accurate and then transcribed to maintain the integrity of the information provided by each informant. In this process, the authors sought to explore in detail the informants' experiences regarding their roles in decision-making, interactions with the village government, and their views on transparency and accountability.

In addition to interviews, participatory observation was also conducted to capture the social dynamics and interactions that occur directly. Observations were conducted during crucial activities involving community participation, such as village deliberations or development planning meetings. Through this method, the authors can directly witness patterns of community participation and record situations that arise during activities. These observations allow the authors to understand how the decision-making process is carried out, including how the community is involved and whether their voices are heard in each stage of village development. These observations were systematically recorded in field notes and then analyzed together with data obtained from interviews and documents.

The data collected from these various sources was then analyzed using a thematic approach to identify the main themes that emerged related to the dynamics of inter-actor relationships, leadership styles, and the level of community participation. The analysis process began with coding, in which the transcribed data was labeled based on emerging concepts or patterns, such as "authoritarian leadership," "village management transparency," and "community participation." These codes were grouped into broader categories, which then developed into main themes that showed patterns of interaction, constraints, and factors at play in the implementation of village policies.

To ensure the validity of the findings, the authors used the triangulation technique by comparing data from various sources—documents, interviews, and observations. This triangulation helps ensure that the data obtained is consistent and avoids interpretation bias. Furthermore, to verify the results of the analysis, the authors conducted member checking or rechecking with several key informants. This technique aims to ensure that the results of the analysis are in accordance with the views and experiences of the informants and help strengthen the research conclusions.

Through meticulous data collection and analysis, this research seeks to present a comprehensive picture of how village leadership influences community involvement in the development process and identify factors that may hinder or support the achievement of participatory democracy in Soriutu Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Soriutu Village: Its History and Recent Politics, Economics, and Social Conditions

Soriutu Village was formed in 1965 as an area resulting from the division of the Banggo Village, which consists of ten hamlets: Soriutu, Sigi, Nggaro Niu, Ladya, Manggelewa, Palia,

Madalandi, Sorilandi, Samada, and Meci Angi. Despite having the smallest area of 3.71 km², Soriutu Village is the most populous among the nine other villages in the Manggelewa district, with a population of 4,070 people (2,029 men and 2,041 women). The village centre stretches along the Dompu highway to West Sumbawa. At the west end, Samada Hamlet and Soriutu Hamlet are the busiest compared to 8 other hamlets because there is a village market (as an asset of the Dompu Regency Government), which is the economic source of Soriutu Village and the residents of the surrounding villages, namely Lanci Jaya, Doromelo, and Tekasire. This market sells various crops, vegetables, and livestock, generally imported from the Bima Regency and certain villages like Soriutu, Lanci Jaya, and Nusa Jaya. In the last ten years, corn has become the primary crop for all farmers after being encouraged by the Dompu Regency Government to clear vacant lands for planting corn and provide assistance for agricultural production facilities for farmers. Corn has mainly replaced teak trees on state land. Freshly logged teak roots are visible in some regions of the village. Farmers make full use of their land for corn, and some of them still grow rice. Most of the residents are cattle farmers, who are the mainstay of the residents because they have extensive grazing fields. The high demand for corn ignites the enthusiasm of farmers to plant it, contributing to the growth of the village economy.

The economic potential of Soriutu Village is relatively large, but it needs the village's original income. Its incomes are from the National Village Fund (*Dana Desa*), Village Fund Allocation (*Alokasi Dana Desa/ADD*), and regional tax revenue sharing. The Dompu Regency Government formed the *Badan Usaha Milik Desa/BumDesa* in all villages in 2006. At that time, the *BUMDesa* of Soriutu Village had a savings and loan business unit. However, most borrowers considered the *BUMDesa* funds as grants, leading to their unwillingness to repay the loans. As a result, the operational capital of the *BUMDesa* was exhausted. The Dompu Regency Government reactivated this institution in 2016 and invested 30 million rupiahs in August. The experience of the first *BUMDesa* has prevented this village from taking on a savings and loan business unit, even though this unit is needed by farmers who still depend on loans for their capital needs.

"The government has implemented various programs in villages, including the *IDT* and the *BUMDesa*. However, many citizens mistakenly perceive government funds as gifts, making it challenging for the Village Government to improve residents' standard of living if loan funds are not repaid. Instead of establishing savings and loan units, the *BUMDesa* is more inclined to focus on buying and selling agricultural and livestock products." (Interview with Mr. Aidin H. Ibrahim, Head of Soriutu Village period 2010–2016, on October 1, 2022). In terms of socio-cultural conditions, Soriutu Village is generally relatively heterogeneous. Many immigrants from various ethnicities have become residents of this village. There has never been an inter-ethnic conflict. Donggo descendants from the Bima Regency dominate the Soriutu village, along with migrants from Bali, Lombok, and Dompu. The existence of transgender people is also accepted in this village, even though they are a minority group, are not invited to *Musdes* activities, and are rarely invited by ordinary citizens to commemorate life-circle ceremonies.

During its 56 years of existence, Soriutu Village has been led by as many as seven village heads: the 1965–1974 period (Baco Yunus), the 1974–1991 period (A. Muis Hamza), the 1991–1999 period (A Bakar M. Said), the 1999–2007 period (Mansur M. Said), the 2007–2010 period (Jahrudin), the 2010–2016 period (Aidin H. Ibrahim), and the 2017–2023 period (Aidin H. Abraham). Until now, the Soriutu Village Government has carried out various activities to carry out government duties, as shown by the people going back and forth to the Village Office to obtain public services.

Non-Democratic Nature of the Village Political Leadership and the Dynamic of Actors Relations in All Stages of the Development Process

Within the framework of Soriutu Village's development management, how leaders carry out their roles and responsibilities—commonly referred to as their leadership style—tends to lead to authoritarian leadership behaviour, as demonstrated particularly by the village head figure throughout the 2010–2016 period. An autocratic leader is characterized by overcontrolling work and placing too much emphasis on task completion, where they are expected to issue commands and never take advice without question (Helms, 2020; Hendrix & McNichols, 1982; Liu & Yang, 2019; O'Brien, 2010; Opalo & Smith, 2021; Springer et al., 2020; Vedeld, 2000).

Authoritarian leaders focus mainly on control (Aryee et al., 2007). These characteristics were confirmed through several elaborations below. Surprisingly, however, the village head figure, who was considered authoritarian by several residents, especially the key informants in this research, was re-elected as a political leader for the 2017–2023 period through the 2017 Dompu Regency's Simultaneous Village Head Election (*Pemilihan Kepala Desa/Pilkades Serentak*).

Since April 2016, Soriutu Village has been led by Mr Jufri, who previously served as the village secretary and was the temporary substitute village head (*Pelaksana Tugas/PLT Kepala Desa*). The former village head, Aidin H. Ibrahim, had to resign because he would run for re-election as the village head in the 2017 *Pilkades Serentak*. Most residents were enthusiastic when Mr. Jufri was appointed the *PLT Kepala Desa*. They had high hopes that he would change the "bad tradition" of the former village head during his six years in office, which was considered not to encourage community participation and was not transparent in various village development activities. "*The Village Activity Implementation Team (Tim Pelaksana Kegiatan Desa/TPKD) was formed in 2016, but in previous years there were none. The village head always works alone and seems closed off. He managed all village development programs alone during his six years of leadership. He has never formed a TPKD like it is today.*" (Interview with Mr Lalu Selamat, Head of the *Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat/LPM*, on October 2, 2022)

Although Mr. Jufri served as the Village Secretary during the leadership of the village head for the 2010–2016 period, he did not dare go too far to change the situation of development management that was not participatory, especially in the domain of carrying out government duties, for fear of causing chaos and misalignment of actions with the village head, as he stated, "*I did have a direct supervisor; no other was the village head. As the Village Secretary at that time, if I took actions that were contrary to his wishes and stance, later I would be accused of trespassing, being labelled a provocateur, or not being good at showing harmonization of performance with the leader*" (Interview with Mr. Jufri, the *PLT Kepala Desa*, on October 4, 2022). After becoming the *PLT Kepala Desa*, he invited more community members to be involved in the village development processes. Activities in 2016 will soon involve various parties, including the village officials, the *LPM*, the *BPD*, the *Kader Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa/KPMD*, and residents.

"*Under the control of Mr. Jufri as the PLT Kepala Desa, meetings or meetings related to village activities must invite many parties. For example, the BUMDesa meeting, which took place at the Village Office on November 23, 2016, has involved many parties, such as the BUMDesa manager, the BPD, the LPM, the KPMD, and several villagers, in the context of evaluating the BUMDesa activities that have received capital participation from the Dompu Regency Government of Rp. 30 million and running a business of buying and selling livestock.*" (Interview with Mrs Nurhayati, the *KPMD* personnel, on October 4, 2022)

Some informants also assessed that the former village head appointed all village officials who became his loyal supporters (voters) or had kinship relations with him. However, most of them were considered to need more competence to carry out government duties. The former village head was supposed to prioritize and promote his supporters or success teams to fill critical positions in influential institutions such as the *BPD*, the *LPM*, and the *Karang Taruna*. He was also considered untransparent in managing the village funds and activities because almost all projects were managed singly with the apparatus. During his leadership, most residents were inactive. Some were ignorant, did not want to be involved because they were not involved, and did not know what was happening at the village office. "*After being directed by the PLT Kepala Desa, villagers began to be invited and involved in all meetings at the village office. They were also asked to participate in capacity-building training with village officials organized by the Dompu Regency Government Institution.*" (Interview with Mrs. Iswati, the *Posyandu Cadre*, on October 5, 2022)

The occurrence mentioned above is consistent with the research findings of the Reality Check Approach+ Team the Palladium Group (2016), which deduced that participation in community meetings could be more motivated despite the scarcity of formal opportunities to influence decisions about village priorities. Since "it does not affect us as small people," it is best to leave these decisions to the elites. Most individuals preferred informal information exchange over attending official community gatherings or going to the village office, as long as promises were kept. "*The performance of the PLT Kepala Desa in carrying out government, development, and*

community tasks was better than before. He wanted to set an example for the next village heads to always be transparent in their actions." (Interview with Mrs Rusni, Chair of the Community Centre, on October 5, 2022)

After being led by the *PLT Kepala Desa*, several village officials and certain *Lembaga Kemasyarakatan Desa/LKD* administrators were reluctant to reveal the "bad" behaviour of the former village head leadership. In several interviews, some *LKDs* led by supporters of the former village head refused to explain the reasons for the closure of the former village head's ability to carry out village programs or activities. They prefer to talk about the village planning process in 2016, which was more open than the previous year. "*Management of the village development in previous years was less open, but during my temporary leadership, I tried to manage it as openly as possible through information dissemination and community involvement in the village planning-budgeting forums.*" (Interview with Mr. Jufri, the *PLT Kepala Desa*, on October 4, 2022)

Based on the description above, the authors conclude that the two parties disagree with each other when they describe the role of the village government, especially during the 2010–2016 village head period, in encouraging the development of participatory democracy in Soriotu Village. The first party, the *BPD* Leaders, and particular village apparatuses considered that the development process from planning to implementation had been running according to regulations. The second party, the *PLT Kepala Desa*, the Head of the *LPM*, as well as several villagers like the Chair of the Community Centre, the *KPMD* Cadre, and the *Posyandu* Cadre, admitted that the 2010–2016 village head and his apparatus had not encouraged the disclosure of development information in village planning and budgeting, including the domain of implementing development programs that accused of being more dominant in the hands of the village government without involving the elements of the community. "*Before Mr. Jufri's leadership as the PLT Kepala Desa, villagers were never involved in any activities, but now they are more open.*" (Interview with Mrs. Nurhayati, the *KPMD* Cadre, on October 4, 2022)

The narrative of the assessment of the autocratic leadership behaviour of the former village head, which was inversely proportional to the democratic leadership style of the *PLT Kepala Desa*, was increasingly widespread when referring to the facts of the performance of the Village Government in managing various development management activities at all stages, namely planning, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation. Most of the informants from the *LKDs'* administrators and villagers stated that they did not know the details of the village development governance in previous years because the degree of community engagement in this area was relatively low. For example, the *BPD* and the *LPM* leaders could talk at length about the village planning and budgeting process but not so much about implementing the development programs. In their eyes, the 2010–2016 village head secretly implemented the village programs. "*I was not active in the village for five years because I was never involved, so I chose to dedicate myself as the personnel of the PKK Kecamatan fully. The PLT Kepala Desa asked me to return to the village and become an LPM administrator.*" (Interview with Mrs Rusni, Chair of the Community Centre, on October 5, 2022)

At the village planning stage, the ten existing Hamlets held the deliberation (*Musyawahar Dusun/Musdus*), especially to welcome the discussion forum for the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa/RPJMDesa*) every six years. Hamlet administrators, community leaders, and women's groups were invited to the *Musdus* to formulate proposals for sub-village-scale development programs. Representatives from each hamlet were then mobilized to the Village Office to participate in the *RPJMDesa Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan Desa/Musrenbangdes*. "*Those invited as participants in the RPJMDesa and the RKPDesa Musrenbangdes forums usually included community leaders, youth, women, and religious leaders in which each hamlet sent five to six delegates.*" (Interview with Mr Imam, Head of the *BPD*, on October 8, 2022)

The argument from the Head of the *BPD* contradicted the statement of Mr. Masjidil as one of the Youth Leaders of the Madalandi Hamlet (Interview on October 6, 2022) that "The Village Government has never involved residents in village planning forums, only community leaders were invited. Information regarding the schedule for the forum has never been publicly disclosed." That implies that village planning activities are dominated by the role of village elites,

namely village leaders. If a hamlet's representatives consisted of five or six people, those were undoubtedly the head of the hamlet, the head of the *Rukun Warga/RW*, the head of the *Rukun Tetangga/RT*, and a few community leaders. This contradictory fact confirms the weakness of deliberative democracy. According to Kohn (2000), it tends to prefer the means of communication among the elites. Instead of achieving a rational consensus, mobilization, the creation of collective identities, and concerted action have driven the expansion of society's democratic character.

Deliberation promoted by the concepts of deliberative democracy and participatory democracy has a significant influence on fostering understanding and creating the opportunity to exchange errors for truth to promote the capacity for representative thinking and more valid conclusions (Arendt, 1969); and to increase efficacy, knowledge, and participation (Fishkin, 2011; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Jacobs et al., 2009); and to legitimize the political system and contribute to social cohesion (Müller, 2019). Deliberation is typically understood as a public discussion of sociopolitical issues that should include or represent everyone affected by a topic, provide equal participation opportunities, include citizens who express a variety of viewpoints and are open to alternatives, debate the topic in good faith, and focus on arguments rather than coercive power. Deliberation frequently aims to gain agreement or inspire action (Mendelberg & Oleske, 2000).

While at the village budgeting stage, this area was not widely known to residents other than the Village Government, especially the village head, as the party who best understands the details of the village budgeting because they often consulted with the Dompu Regency Government institutions in determining the details of the village budget spending because there is a regional policy that requires the village to issue a budget allocation according to the activities planned by the District Government through the *Badan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dan Pemerintahan Desa/BPMPD*. Consequently, this kind of policy narrows the village's flexibility to carry out various activities that have been previously planned. The Village Government must change the budget to suit the will of the Above-Level Government Institution. The village government conducts the village budgeting process, with particular involvement from the village head, in collaboration with the district government. Consequently, the community needs more flexibility to execute pre-determined tasks effectively.

For the implementation of the village development program in 2016, during the leadership of the *PLT Kepala Desa*, as mentioned earlier, a *TPKD* was formed, which involved elements of the village government and residents. That was not done the previous year when the village government only carried out the implementation of activities privately. Only the village head and his closest apparatus knew the implementing realm of all development activities. "*The TPKD personnel were filled by the Head of Government Affairs, the Head of Development Affairs, the Chief of Service Affairs, the KPMD, the LPM, and the residents' representatives. Everyone was involved in managing the implementation process of all programs; this area was not only the authority of the village head.*" (Interview with Mr. Jufri, the *PLT Village Head*, on October 4, 2022)

The implementation of village development programmes has undergone a notable transformation by establishing a *TPKD* that actively engages the local population. It is anticipated that this will transform the formerly insular approach to village development, which the village head predominantly oversaw. The existence of the *TPKD* was expected to be the seed for the transformation of the village development management practices that seem isolated under the control of the 2010–2016 village head period. "*Now, the system for implementing development programs in our village positioned the village head as the coordinator of the TPKD, which was chaired by the Head of Government Affairs and consists of the LPM, the KPMD, and the community representatives. The total team personnel were seven and six people. The TPKD controlled all program implementation activities in the field.*" (Interview with Mr. Lalu Selamat, Head of the *LPM*, on October 2, 2022)

As the implementation of the activities progressed, there were ripples of protest against the residents' dissatisfaction with specific programs, such as constructing a road in the Meciangi Hamlet. The protest related to the construction process that did not meet the specifications for the feasibility of the material as stated in the planning document, where the quantity of sand and stone used was only small while the soil was more. As a result, when the rain fell, that road became

muddy, and many motorbikes and cars were stuck because of the mud. Residents around the road area objected and reported the matter to several parties, including the Manggelewa District Head (*Camat*). The Village Government then held a special meeting, facilitated by the *Camat*, inviting the Regency Technical Team and several villagers. The meeting resulted in an agreement that the Village Government and the *TPKD* acknowledged that the materials used were imperfect and would be repaired a few weeks later.

This residents' protest is something new and unique because, during the six years of the leadership of the village head for the 2010–2016 period, no one dared to do that. All parties took the lesson that it is a common thing that happens when there is social dissatisfaction in society. Public demonstrations against road-building projects that fail to meet material feasibility requirements are a novel and distinctive phenomenon. It entailed convening various actors to identify resolutions and rectify errors. The assessment of village development is currently in its nascent phase; nonetheless, the significance of the community's involvement in supervising the execution of development initiatives is apparent, as demonstrated by the instances of protests against road building that caused disruptions to everyday routines.

A group of residents protesting the road construction activities that were considered to be interfering with their daily activities, as described above, is an essential example of how residents have monitored the implementation of development programs. A few oddities can be narrated in this section because the informants could only tell about the development activities in 2016 as the village development information faucet opened under the leadership of the *PLT Village Head*. The data for 2015 and before were not widely disclosed by them; only a few informants mentioned the absence of the 2010–2016 village head's Accountability Reports (*Laporan Pertanggungjawaban/LPJ*).

There is hope for realizing participatory democracy based on social justice in Soriutu Village as a response to the autocratic leadership style in the administration of the village development. The community generally hopes all stakeholders will be more open-minded toward supporting information transparency, including village planning and budgeting. Residents fervently desire a village head open to completely involving stakeholders outside of the village government in managing the village development because responsive leadership, the openness of public information, and the participation of citizens in various activities in the village are the foundations for realizing participatory democracy. Whoever has the mandate to be the power holder in the village must be committed to developing participatory democracy. Such an opposition towards autocratic leadership styles has instilled optimism regarding the potential achievement of participatory democracy founded on principles of social fairness. The community anticipates a shift in the attitudes of all stakeholders towards promoting information transparency and fostering the active participation of external entities in the governance of village development.

This research elucidates the autocratic leadership style exhibited by the village head during the period spanning from 2010 to 2016. The theoretical significance of the study lies in its confirmation and description of the key traits associated with autocratic leadership. Specifically, it sheds light on the leader's tendency to exert excessive control over work processes, prioritize task completion, issue directives, and exhibit a reluctance to consider subordinates' recommendations critically. This finding aligns with prior scholarly investigations highlighting autocratic leadership tendencies and traits. There was a need for more community involvement in decision-making processes and village development initiatives during the previous administration. The theoretical contribution of this study is also in its emphasis on the significance of community engagement in the decision-making process that influences both participative and sustainable development within villages. That aligns with the theoretical framework of community engagement in the context of community development and empowerment.

Our analysis has uncovered a need for more openness in the administration of village funds and activities under the leadership of the prior village head. The study's theoretical contribution emphasizes the significance of openness and accountability in the governance of village development resources and activities. It aligns with the fundamental tenets of effective

governance and the theoretical frameworks surrounding openness and accountability in public administration. This study demonstrates the inclination of communities towards informal engagement in information-sharing and decision-making processes at the village level. It underscores the significance of comprehending local contexts and preferences when devising community participation mechanisms that are both effective and pertinent.

Furthermore, this study elucidates the impact of the village head's actions on promoting or obstructing participatory democracy within the local community. The village head who served from 2010 to 2016 is regarded as exhibiting an autocratic approach to leadership, whereas the acting village head demonstrates a democratic leadership style. This observation demonstrates that the efficacy of community participation in decision-making processes and village development is contingent upon the leadership of the village head. The study further emphasizes the significance of information disclosure in village development planning and budgeting. The absence of openness in the procedural aspects might impede the engagement of the community and diminish the level of confidence in the governance of the village. Hence, village administrations must prioritize information transparency and actively engage the community in decision-making procedures about the village's progress.

Despite the presence of deliberative forums and participatory planning, the prevailing influence of village leaders within these mechanisms suggests inherent constraints in attaining inclusivity and broader community engagement. Hence, it is imperative to contemplate a more comprehensive approach to democracy that fosters mobilization, the establishment of collective identity, and collective action in decision-making and the execution of village development initiatives. The significance of proficient village development management encompasses the democratic processes of planning, budgeting, implementation, and assessment of development programmes.

The efficacy of village development management hinges on extant policies and regulations as well as the village administration's transparency, community engagement, and accountability in actively involving the community during all phases of development. The findings of this study can contribute to the theoretical understanding of various aspects, including leadership styles, community participation, transparency in village management, preferences for informal participation in the context of village development management, participatory democracy, critiques of deliberative democracy, and the optimal model for effective village development management.

Table 1 below summarizes the primary issues found in the research locus related to leadership style, community involvement, and recommendations for increasing transparency and participation in the development management domain.

Tabel 1. Non-Democratic Nature of the Village Political Leadership and the Dynamic of Actors Relations in All Stages of the Development Process

| Aspects | Descriptions |
|--|---|
| Leadership Style | From 2010 to 2016, the village head's leadership style tended to be authoritarian, limiting community involvement in decision-making and development management. Full control rested with the village head and his closest staff. |
| Community Participation | Community participation was low from 2010 to 2016, as most residents were not involved in deliberations and did not have access to information related to development activities. |
| Changes Under the Control of the Acting Village Head | In 2016, under the control of the Acting Village Head, Mr. Jufri, changes began to be seen with the formation of the TPKD involving LPM, BPD, Village Community Empowerment Cadres, and community representatives. |
| Resident Response to Change | Residents responded positively to the acting village head's open leadership style. They were more often invited to village meetings and involved in the development planning and monitoring process, increasing their sense of ownership of |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Village Budgeting | village programs. District-level policies still hinder budgeting by limiting villages' flexibility in determining fund allocations, making them less responsive to local needs. |
| Development Supervision | Residents began to dare to protest against inappropriate project implementation. It reflects an increase in community awareness and a desire to monitor the quality of development. |
| Theoretical Contribution | This study emphasizes the significance of transparency, inclusive leadership, and village autonomy in building participatory democracy. These findings are relevant to community empowerment and the importance of deliberation in decision-making. |

CONCLUSION

The enactment of the Village Law is a response to the inherent desire and necessity to enhance democratic governance within rural communities. Incorporating a bottom-up development approach into the reform agenda is a crucial component of enhancing regulations to promote an improved quality of life for rural residents. The manifestation of democracy inside the village will occur when the jurisdiction of village development management transforms, resulting in a space where active citizens and a responsive government contest interests. The first requirement for establishing a participatory democracy that prioritizes justice and social welfare within the village is the removal of obstacles hindering public engagement.

The Soriutu Village's setting reveals that the authoritarian leadership style employed therein hinders the inclusion of citizens in various stages of village development management, impeding the achievement of participatory democracy. The lack of communication media platforms for informing the public reflects the village government's reluctance to apply sound governance principles in their routine tasks. Public accountability as a process of building a mutual agreement between the village government and the interests of the residents through the allocation of resources has not been fully achieved, where the Village Government has failed to enforce a collective accountability mechanism with the residents regarding the priority of activities, locations, beneficiaries, and the amount of the budget for various village development activities.

Soriutu Village still faces significant challenges, especially related to obstacles in achieving participatory democracy. The authoritarian leadership style applied by the village head hinders active community participation in the decision-making process and management of village development. The village head tends to play a role with strong control, only involving certain parties in decision-making and limiting community access to information and opportunities to participate. This situation has a direct impact on the effectiveness of participatory democracy because most development activities do not reflect the aspirations and needs of the community.

Transparency in village financial management still needs to be improved. Residents need full access to information related to village budget planning and allocation, which has reduced community trust in the development process. This condition also results in minimal community involvement in providing input or supervising the progress of development, which ultimately reduces the quality of village governance.

The authors recommend the need for significant changes in the approach to village leadership and management. The village government should adopt a more inclusive leadership style, in which the village head opens up more space for community participation, especially in deliberation forums concerning strategic planning and decision-making. Transparency must be improved by providing more accessible information to the public, both in terms of development plans and budget use. It will allow residents to engage more meaningfully, as well as encourage a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the results of village development.

The village government can also initiate training or outreach programs for the community regarding their rights and roles in the development process. Through such an activity, residents

can contribute maximally to creating a stronger participatory democracy system. These steps are expected to encourage Soriotu Village towards more equitable and participatory governance and align the development process with the spirit of the Village Law, which aims to strengthen democracy at the village level.

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