

## **A Comprehensive Planning to Govern Rural Community – Case of Taiwan**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to explore various concepts and principles of development planning and governance for rural community. In addition, some planning and governing experiences of several countries are also discussed. First section is to review the changes and trends of rural planning and management. Rural planning was highly centralized in terms of a top-down approach in early time and hence local government was marginalized. Nevertheless, the top-down approach gradually combined with a bottom-up approach due to the emerging difficulties and problems. And the responsibility for planning and management thus shifting from center to local. Next section explores the principles or basic rules for rural development, which are essential elements to pursue the rural development at the local level. The third section takes a recent governance for rural community in Taiwan as an example to demonstrate how the authorities to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches in the process of rural regeneration. Some concluding remarks are made at the last section*

### **I. Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a trend towards shifting increasing responsibility for planning and management from central government agencies to local government but, as well as operational activity, a measure of strategic planning is needed at every level (Dalal-Clayton, Dent, and Dubois, 2003, p7). Therefore, at community level, communities should plan and implement activities from their own resources and may contribute to district plans. The strategic planning for district level may include infrastructure, land use and allocation or regulation of water and other natural resources. At provincial level, coordination of district plans, financial audit and provision of specialist services not available within district should be their responsibility. While at national level, raising and distribution of revenue for public services; policy-making and strategic planning are doing by this level.

According to PlanAfrica (2000), rural planning may comprise three crucial elements: 1. The content – the strategies and policies that underlie what rural planning seeks to achieve; 2. The institutional framework within which rural planning operates, especially the agencies and people involved and how they interact; 3. The approach – often seen in terms of the polarities of a top-down, blueprint approach or a bottom-up approach. In fact, rural planning is concerned with planning for development, land use, the allocation and management of resources. It is frequently argued that the emphasis of planning should be on the process of planning rather than the production of a document, i.e. the plan (see e.g. Klein and Mabin1998).

Since the 1970s, developing countries have seen many initiatives in decentralized rural and regional planning (Dalal-Clayton, Dent, and Dubois, 2003, p9). The reasons behind them have been various but, in most cases, include: concern at the flight of people from rural areas to cities; a desire to reduce regional inequality by some redistribution of resources and by responding to local needs; a wish to secure rural livelihoods by more effective delivery of services like education, health care and agricultural extension; and concern about the degradation of natural resources. Indeed, these reasons may still hold today.

It is useful of strategic planning at the local level learning from those early experiments in regional planning. Usually, the norm for development planning was the five-year plan, and a regional dimension was incorporated through designating regional growth centers coupled with packages of incentives to attract investment. The goal was industrial expansion. Part of the impetus came from the redistribution with growth model promoted, in particular by the World Bank and the International Labor Organization during the early and mid-1970s. The objective of reducing social inequality was supposed to be met by investment in appropriate sectors as the economy grew, but economies didn't grow, and the master-plan mentality of bureaucracies emphasized physical planning – a geographic zoning of development backed by regulation (Chenery et al., 1974; Dewar et al., 1986).

Other planning approaches have taken urban centers as their starting point.

The so-called urban functions in rural development approach, the strategy for promoting rural development is to develop a network of small, medium-sized and larger centers, each providing centrally located and hierarchically organized services, facilities and infrastructure (Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1978). Rural development was supposed to be stimulated by filling in the missing functions through selective investment in rural towns. Translating this model into practice has been problematic for three main reasons: 1. All urban functions are assumed to benefit the whole surrounding region and all rural households (issue of access control and economic status are not considered); 2. The methods for selecting key towns have not been clear (they have focused only on the attributes of the towns themselves with no regard for the rural potential); 3.

The model is based on generalizations which do not take account of the various roles of urban centers, which are determined by the rural and regional context. Some strategic approaches that have taken rural areas as their starting point include intensive development zones (IDZs) promoted, for example, in Zambia in the 1970s with the aim of concentrating resources in a limited number of areas with potential, in the hope that self-sustaining growth would be achieved and the surrounding areas would benefit through multiplier effects. The Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) program in South Africa represents a return to such an area-based focus (Khanyamrc, 2000). The SDI program is a short-term investment strategy that aims to unlock inherent economic potential in specific spatial locations in South Africa.

Such approaches gave way in the 1980s to integrated rural development programs (IRDPs) at the district level (Warren, 1988). Throughout the developing countries, IRDPs grew to be highly dependent on donor assistance and, in particular, came to rely on organizational and procedural autonomy to achieve their objectives. The attraction of by-passing ineffective local administrations is obvious but this very action hindered the development of local institutional capacity to prepare and implement development programs. In Tanzania for instance, administrative decentralization in the 1970s was accompanied by the preparation of Regional Integrated Development Plans (Kikula et al., 1999).

All of these initiatives have been technocratic, top-down exercises and, initially, have been centrally directed. There was a gradual shift away from the national blueprint plan toward provincial or district planning, but this was hamstrung by a chronic lack of capacity at district level. Building this capacity is a long process. None of the early attempts at decentralization successfully incorporated meaningful participation of the supposed beneficiaries in the planning process. In nearly every case, turf wars developed between centrally focused sectoral agencies and decentralized district authorities. Coordination between the rival agencies has always proved to be difficult (Sazanami and Newels, 1990; Rakodi, 1990).

Based upon an analysis of past experience with regional planning, Simon and Rakodi (1990) identify some of the components needed in strong local planning strategies:

- clearly focused objectives and targets areas;
- Substantial grassroots participation and control over decision-making, as distinct from mere consultation by planners;
- Availability of appropriate resources, training and powers;
- Orientation towards planning as a process rather than towards the plan as a product;
- on-going monitoring and evaluation of qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions, and in terms of appropriate criteria;
- Integration between sectors and ministries to enhance the effectiveness of state activities;
- Focus on sustainability as well as increased prosperity.

Many of these criteria have been reiterated by subsequent analysis (e.g. Dalal-Clayton and Dent, 1993; 2001; Bass et al., 1995) The above IRDPs attempted to provide more focus for rural development efforts during 1970s. Its concept was to address rural development priorities and needs through a set of mutually supportive components, e.g. a combination of agronomic packages with credit, development of infrastructure like roads and water supply, commonly with a baseline natural resources survey, sometimes even clarification of land tenure. However, most IRDPs have been integrated in name only.

Their component elements have often been little more than a shopping list of essentially independent sub-projects, each of which could have been undertaken separately by responsible government agencies, and simply subsidized by the IRDP's external funds (Dalal-Clayton and Dent, 1993).

In order for overcoming the deficiencies of IRDPs, there is gradually renewed interest in decentralization. In particular IRDPs' propensity to by-pass and, thus weaken local institutions. As Goldman (1988) pointed out: Decentralization appeared to offer a locus for integrated rural development, an institution to deal with local government, and the potential for downsizing central government and promoting good governance. Ribot (1999) put forward the concept of integral local development to improve the outcomes and sustainability of integrated rural development initiatives. Although there is a trend towards decentralization, there are quite different situations for various countries. For instance, Ghana completed a national vision for development (the National Development Policy Framework– Ghana Vision 2020) in 1994.

There has been an attempt to copy this vision in policies at all levels and a strongly focused model has been introduced that provides power and places responsibility for rural planning with District Assemblies (Botchie,2000). In Zimbabwe, there is a mix of devolution to Rural District Councils and deconcentration with central government, but no coordinated strategy for rural development (Plan Afric, 2000). South Africa has a much more centralized approach and is still grappling with the dilemma of the center versus the provinces and with the lack of viable rural development institutions (Khanya-mrc, (2000).

This section is to review the changes and trends of rural planning and management. Rural planning was highly centralized in terms of a top-down approach in early time and hence local government was marginalized. Nevertheless, the top-down approach gradually combined with a bottom-up approach due to the emerging difficulties and problems. And the responsibility for planning and management thus shifting from center to local. Next section explores the principles or basic rules for rural development, which are essential elements to pursue the rural development at the local level. The third section takes a recent governance for rural community in Taiwan as an example to demonstrate how the authorities to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches in the process of rural regeneration. Some concluding remarks are made at the last section

## ***II. Rural Concerns and Development***

### **A. Rural concerns**

This section is to explore the meaning and purpose of rural and local development. But first, what “rural” might mean? For pragmatic use, “rural areas” could be defined as those with “low population density containing scattered dwellings, villages and small towns” (Moseley, 2003). In the context of development initiatives, there are, at least, three crucial elements of this rural scene: 1. the fact that all rural people, and many of economic, social, political and cultural activities which are relevant to their well-being, are by definition located in isolated buildings or in settlements that are both small and widely separated; 2. the fact that the wide expanses of land that necessarily separate them are subject to a mass of powerful and competing demands and pressure as agriculture and other forms of land-extensive economic activity are compelled to restructure; and 3. the fact that an increasingly prosperous and space hungry urban population is drawn, in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons, both to those small settlements and to the wide expanses of land that separate them.

The above rural context has certainly conditioned a set of interrelated concerns that have intensified in recent years and which underlie the various calls made for “rural development” program. The concerns have been indicated more often than not are as follows: 1. economic concerns which derive from the reduced and still reducing ability of land - extensive economic activities – notably agriculture, forestry, quarrying and mining – and of many other rural industries linked closely to them to provide secure employment and adequate incomes for the people engaged in them; 2. social and cultural concerns which are often subsumed in the expression “rural deprivation”. They include un- and under- employment, low incomes, social exclusion, the steady decline of local services and facilities and a deeper cultural depression linked to the erosion of caring local communities, and a sense of powerlessness in the fact of rapid change; 3. Environmental concerns which stem particularly from agricultural intensification and a consequent decline in wildlife and in habitat and countryside diversity. They derive also from the growing pressures placed on the countryside by an urban population that is increasingly keen to live, work and enjoy its leisure time there; 4. Political and institutional concerns related to the lack or frequent inadequacy of the machinery necessary to resolve such concerns at the local level.

### **B. Rural development**

The definition of rural development may be built on the above discussion of rurality and of associated concerns and aspirations and suggested as the followings:

- a broad notion encompassing all important issues pertinent to the collective vitality of rural people and

places...[including] education, health, housing, public services and facilities, capacity for the leadership and governance, and cultural heritage as well as sectoral and general economic issues... (OECD, 1990)

- a multi-dimensional process that seeks to integrate, in a sustainable manner, economic, socio-cultural and environmental objectives (Kearney et al., 1994); and
- a sustained and sustainable process of economic, social, cultural and environmental change designed to enhance the long-term well-being of the whole community (Moseley, 1996).

Some arguments about the content, the institutional framework and the approach have been discussed decades, for instance: Why should rural development be pursued principally at the local level? Why do rural programs and plans and the projects that they contain need to relate not just to rural areas in general but to this or that specific area? Why should machinery be put in place at the local level for determining and implementing rural development policies, programs and projects? In short, why and how far should there be both decentralization (a shift of decision-making to lower levels) and territorialization (shift of focus from sectors such as education, transport and manufacturing to areas)? There seem to be five main elements of the argument for specifically local development delineating as follows.

### 1. *Local diversity is the core of rural development*

Rural areas have much in common but they are far from being identical. Take economy as an example, some still dominated by agriculture; for others tourism, mineral extraction, or manufacturing industry may be their principal vocation. For natural environment, some are well-endowed with natural resources, others are not. So while all rural areas have a scattered population and a landscape dominated by open countryside, their economic and social circumstances, their problems, needs and development potential will all vary greatly? It follows that the programs that address their problems must be locally sensitive and oriented.

### 2. *Rural problems are interdependent and interlocking*

This means the measures to address them and the agencies involved must be well connected. And the most effective way of achieving this may well be at an intermediate level, somewhere between the nation or region on the one hand, and the village or community on the other. It is at this level that partnerships are best forged and coordination achieved. At this level, top-down priorities relating to sectors (such as healthcare, energy, or specific industrial sectors) and bottom-up needs are best reconciled.

### 3. *Local rural development relates to local identification and mobilization*

Local people and organizations are key resources in rural development, as sources of information, ideas, energy and enterprise. Such people will only be enthusiastic to participate if they feel that the venture at issue is relevant to their concerns and that any contribution they make is likely to produce beneficial change. In other words, this is about building social capital and accumulating local knowledge and experience.

### 4. *It is essential for rural development to add value to local resources*

Adding value to local resources is likely to provide a more secure and sustainable future for economic development than a strategy relying upon imported materials and capital. This implies a need for a greater understanding of local resources and of their potential for creating new business opportunities. Furthermore, to encourage local purchasing by local and non-local can have the implication that the local economic multiplier will be enhanced.

### 5. *To protect local economy, constructing a defense against globalization is needed*

Globalization triggers the increased opening up of local economies to the world competition. However, local producers are worrying that their shelf space in supermarkets or their products in markets may be occupied or replaced by foreign products. The urgency of developing and marketing local identity and distinctive quality products and services is critical for rural development being pursued at the local level. Some experts (e.g. Ray, 2001) even argued that it is one of growing importance for rural areas to build culture economies.

Based upon the above five arguments and that experience, it seems suitable to define local development as the pursuit of development at a local scale with the aim of addressing local concerns, adding value to local resources and mobilizing local actors. This definition of local development is indeed very similar to the remarks from Walsh (1995) "...it is a radical response that seeks to achieve new objectives in relation to the development process by focusing on such concepts as multi-dimensionality, integration, coordination, subsidiarity and sustainability".

In that regard he suggested three specific tasks for local development: 1. overcoming market failure (i.e. doing socially useful things that are generally unattractive to the market, such as delivering services to a scattered population and integrating environmental conservation and economic development programs); 2. improving local capacity (i.e. the ability and readiness of people and organizations to engage in development initiatives); and 3. Facilitating local empowerment (i.e. giving local actors more power to influence what happens in their locality).

As a matter of fact, a similar viewpoint on pursuing the goals of rural development also proposing that each of the following might be most effectively achieved (National Economic and Social Council, 1994): 1. Pre-development (meaning capacity building and the animation of local groups); 2. the operation of area-based partnerships; 3. the adoption of a strategic planning approach; 4. The fostering of innovative projects and methods; 5. the reduction of social exclusion; 6. the development of enterprise; 7. the promotion of community and group projects.

When rural development has been crystallized by and for practitioners, Marsden (1999) produced a quite similar list of research priorities for rural social scientists. He stressed a need for a greater understanding of diversity within and between rural areas; of the ways of achieving area-based, holistic and integrated rural development; of the emerging new forms of local governance and partnership; of citizenship, capacity building and mobilization of local people; and of the capacity of rural areas for sustainable endogenous development.

This section is about rural development, about the attempts being made in some countries to address in a coordinated and locally sensitive way the range of pressing economic, social and environmental problems that beset the rural areas. Also, it is about some of the fundamental issues and concepts that underlie the intervention. Making it local is an important step for rural development planning. In the next section, an example of Taiwan has been taken to demonstrate that devolution of service delivery to the local level improves effectiveness and responsiveness to local needs.

### ***III. Policy Planning of Rural Regeneration in Taiwan***

#### **1. Background**

Being attracted by the benefits of urban living and the opportunities from booming of industry and commerce around city, young people in rural area immigrated to city since 1960s. In addition, central government pays more attention to the needs of urbanization and industrial development for a long period of time, and causing poor living function and losing rural characteristics in rural area.

In order to revitalize the overall development of rural areas, the government promulgated and put into effect the "Rural Regeneration Act" on 4 August, 2010. It is enacted to establish a rural rejuvenation fund of one hundred and fifty billion NT dollars to promote rural activation and regeneration. It is hoping to take care of the farmers and fishermen in rural areas and to make the rural community filling with "vitality, health and happiness".

#### **2. Policy goals**

- (1) To raise the quality and quantity level of rural population  
To curb the immigration from rural areas to urban areas and to reverse the aging situation, a empowerment plan is implemented.
- (2) To create employment opportunity in rural area  
To assist the rural people adopting local resources to develop innovatory business and sustainable business model.
- (3) To raise the income of rural people  
To guide the rural primary industries from tradition and small scale based transforming to more efficient and value-added business.
- (4) To improve the overall rural environment  
Based on the needs and characteristics of different rural communities, and the living culture to invest the necessary soft and hard resources.

#### **3. Policy orientations**

- (1) Vitality
  - a. To increase involvement of local people and creation of local partnerships in rural development.
  - b. To attract young people to create business or stay in rural areas and strengthen human resources management.
  - c. To create a safe and habitable surroundings in rural communities.

- (2) Health
  - a. To develop environment-friendly or green industry.
  - b. To harmonize with the nature by utilizing land reasonably and protecting the ecological resources.
  - c. To promote low-carbon community construction.
- (3) Happiness
  - a. Strengthening care system.
  - b. Activating cultural assets.
  - c. Promoting a sense of belonging and sharing the values of rural areas mutually.

#### 4. Strategies for implementing rural regeneration policy

Strategies can be divided into two groups, one is bottom-up promoting strategies, the other one is top-down integrating strategies.

- (1) Bottom-up promoting strategy group
  - a. Bottom upstrategy: With the residents of rural community as the body and to form the consensus of future development according to the local needs and resources condition.
  - b. Plan-oriented strategy: Through empowerment project, and using the concept of sustainable development to guide the community to propose the overall development vision. Based on the blue print of rural community to finish the rural regeneration plan and constructing a rural village with quality of modern life and characteristics of traditional village.
  - c. Community autonomy strategy: Encourage the community to set a joint measure, self-managing the community and maintaining the characteristics and style of community.
  - d. Put hardware and software together strategy: Emphasize the human and spiritual regeneration, focus on local culture, the heritage and innovation of artistry, to create a habitable living space and protect the ecological environment.
- (2) Top-down integrating strategy group
  - a. Institution and expertise strategy: planning and constructing an overall implementing mechanism for rural regeneration, and introducing expertise resources related to industry, culture and ecology into the implementation of rural regeneration project.
  - b. Basic needs strategy: In response to the needs of rural industry and infrastructure, providing guidance of entrepreneurship and agribusiness administration and assisting the procurement of equipment and techniques to improve the production conditions and living function in rural area.
  - c. Promote rural industry strategy: Through surveying the inventory of community industry and the planning and marketing of characteristic industry, combining farmland utilization, local production, recreational travel and empowerment to create new opportunities for industrial development in rural community.
  - d. Strengthen cross-sectors or fields cooperation strategy: With the rural community to be the body, coordinating and integrating the expertise and resources from different fields and thus establishing a mechanism of cross-sectors.

#### 5. Rural regeneration project

After finished the four stages (including beginner's course, advanced course, core course, and regeneration course) in Empowerment Program, a community is qualified to propose a rural regeneration project. Rural regeneration project is prepared by local organizations, the so-called community development association, and groups based on the needs of residents in rural community, using the rural community as project scope and reach the consensus by joint discussion then proposed the community development vision and action plan. The project includes the overall environment improvement of rural communities, construction of public facilities, renovation of residential house, industry activation, cultural preservation and utilization, and ecological conservation.

#### IV. Conclusions

To create a good rural community, a guide plan including vision, goals and appropriate strategies is required. The involvement of many residents and local organization is also required during a long period of time for planning and executing. However, plans made for the rural areas are often not implemented and sectoral projects exist in a policy vacuum.

Usually, this state of affairs stems from the mandates of the responsible authorities that lack enough authority or enough resources. Rural planning can be a way for local stakeholders to establish their priorities, bring them into the public domain, and negotiate plans and action to realize these priorities.

Local strategic planning requires reliable information about the condition and trends of natural resources, and about social and economic conditions. Methods to gather, analyze and interpret this information are needed to be well established. It is obvious that there are also some requirements as follows: 1. skilled and dedicated people in community to use these methods; 2. a planning framework within which these people can be brought together; and 3. financial resources sufficient to do the job at the local level.

It should be noted that moving on to the formulation of strategic plans for the development of rural community; an essential need is to explore alternative ways of combining the top-down and the bottom-up together. The need for a better integration of these two approaches to formulating strategies for rural development is becoming apparent in relation to the preparation as shown by Taiwan's local authorities of holistic, area-wide community strategies. There are about 500 communities in Taiwan have completed the proposal of rural regeneration project until the end of year 2014. In order to attract more young people immigrating to rural communities, promotion of the industrial development is the key in rural regeneration, and the development of rural industry will become the first priority in rural regeneration in the near future.

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